

MAHĀMANGALA SUTTA
THE HIGHEST BLESSING



VEN. WERAGODA SARADA MAHA THERO

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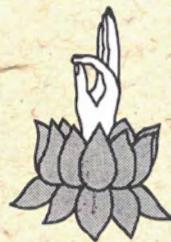
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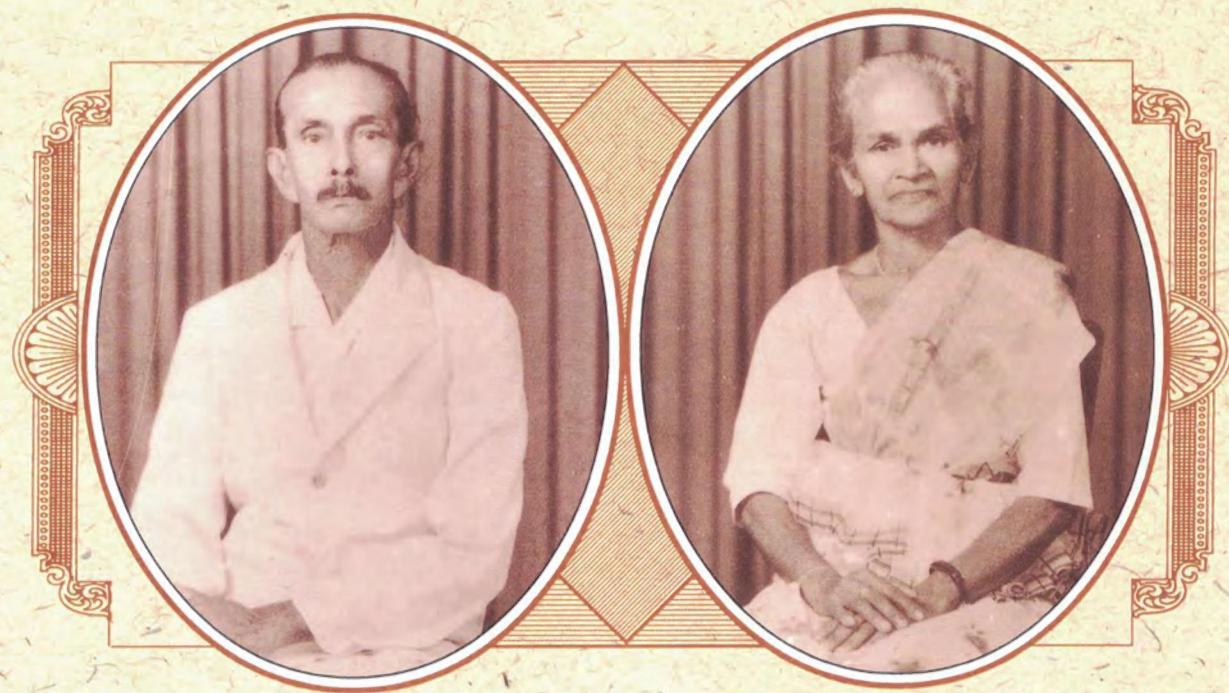


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DEDICATION



The Buddha

the Supremely Enlightened One - taught Gods and men what the greatest blessings are that lead to the highest success.

Among the thirty-eight Highest Blessings preached by the Blessed One in **Mahā Mangala Sutta** (The Discourse on the Highest Blessings), there is **Mātā-Pitu Upatthānam** (the due care and support of parents).

In keeping with what the Buddha said, this work is respectfully dedicated to the cherished memory of my late parents Mr. G. A. Podisingho and Madam G. G. Emalishami, for the love, affection and care they lavished on me, enabling me to spread the Word of the Buddha for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many. May my parents attain the ever-lasting bliss of Nibbana.

Ven. Weragoda Sarada Maha Thero

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The masses in the modern world squander away their precious lives, in an anxious but futile search for avenues that will bring them happiness and success. Like thirsty and helpless animals lured by the deceptive mirage, these mis-directed masses invariably come to grief as the end-result of these foolish pursuits.

The Blessed One, in His supreme wisdom, preached thirty-eight forms of blameless behaviour which will ensure success to both gods and men alike. Embodied in **Mahā Mangala Sutta** (The Discourse on Great Blessings) those thirty-eight factors ensuring high blessings, together form a grammar of life for those who would want to lead a virtuous and successful life.

In spite of the fact that the present Discourse had been a firm favourite of generations of Buddhists, this **Sutta** (Discourse) had not been published in an illustrated version before this. We were persuaded that an illustrated version is very much needed, when we gave extensive thought to the attitude of the contemporary world, towards media.

Most men, women and children of our day are so much attuned to the habit of acquiring knowledge and information through visual media, that text unaccompanied by relevant illustration is not likely to register extensive appeal. Being alert to this development we have been quite particular to support the text of **Mahā Mangala Sutta** with especially commissioned illustrations, each picture reflecting the urge of each of the thirty-eight blessings.



This will make the work available to a vast range of readers, especially the younger ones, whose need for proper moral and spiritual guidance is felt in every part of the globe today.

The general practice is to feel a sense of satisfaction solely by listening to the rhythmic and soothing chanting of this Sutta. While that aspect of the matter is not completely overlooked, the real efficacy of what the Buddha preached has to be derived by living it in everyday existence.

We have made it a special point to communicate the spirit of each blessing with a comprehensive commentary that is calculated to assist the in-depth understanding of the reader.

We commend to the moderns this Blessed Sermon of the Supremely Enlightened Buddha in the earnest hope that the readers will transform their lives towards their betterment, in the light of what is being said in the course of this **Mahā Mangala Sutta**.

I consider it my duty, to record here my grateful thanks to the patrons of SBMC, Mr and Mrs. Dennis Wang Khee Pong, Messrs William Chua Geok Eng, Peter Teo, and Sito Woon Chee-President SBMC. All the members of the SBMC, receive my warmest regards and gratitude for their dedicated and sustained support.

The unfailing sense of duty and service of Ven. Sunanda, Ms. Ang Lian swee (Sita) and Ms. Manel de Silva has to be especially remembered here. They always ensure the success of SBMC Programmes.

With Mettā

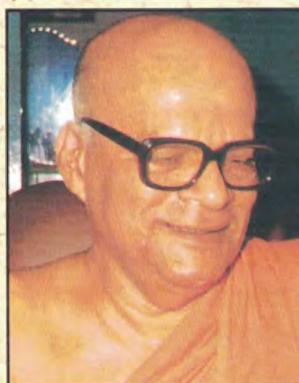
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Weragoda Sarada".

Ven. Weragoda Sarada Maha Thero
Chief Monk, SBMC

SPECIAL MESSAGE

To Ven. Weragoda Sarada Maha Thero, the extensive body of work that makes up the Buddhist Scripture, is an inexhaustible treasure trove. He presents these treasures unselfishly to the generality of men and women everywhere in the world, in a highly utilizable format

Illustrated versions of Buddhist works have, by this time, become the hallmark of Ven. Weragoda Sarada Maha Thero's publishing activity. He has, as no other, discovered the telling effect of the apt illustration in which the Buddha's eternal wisdom has to be couched. The unparalleled success of his series of illustrated works has proved the unassailable correctness of his decision to utilize the fitting image to bring out the significance of the sacred text. What is equally impressive is his unfailing capacity to select works that amply exude the contemporary flavour.



The present work **Mahā Mangala Sutta** (The Discourse on the Great Blessings) has an unmistakable meaning to men and women of our day. The moderns tend to go stray largely because of their inability to identify the proper goals of life, out of millions of options offered to them. In consequence, they are quite likely to lose their sense of direction.

But, in this work, the Buddha has given a supreme guideline for those who would want to make a success of their lives. The applicability of these Blessings to lay life is a special reason why this illustrated English version of **Mahā Mangala Sutta** possesses a telling significance to men and women everywhere.

It is my great pleasure to congratulate the Ven. Monk for this publication and to confer my blessings on him to wish that he will continue his good work without interruption.

With Metta

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Sri Dhammananda" followed by a date.

Ven. Dr. Kirinde Sri Dhammananda Maha Nayaka Thero, Ph.D., D.Litt.
Chief Prelate, Malaysia, Singapore.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Mahā Mangala Sutta - "The Highest Blessing", represents the latest publications achievement of The Singapore Buddhist Meditation Centre. The work is, in addition, a significant landmark in our unceasing effort to keep the global community informed about the Word of the Buddha.

Although **Mahā Mangala Sutta** (The Discourse on the Highest Blessing) has remained a sermon of perennial interest to the Buddhists all over the world, this is the first-ever occasion that the work has been brought out in English as a fully illustrated version. Each of the thirty-eight Blessings receives its pictorial representation.

Mahā Mangala Sutta is totally modern in urge and



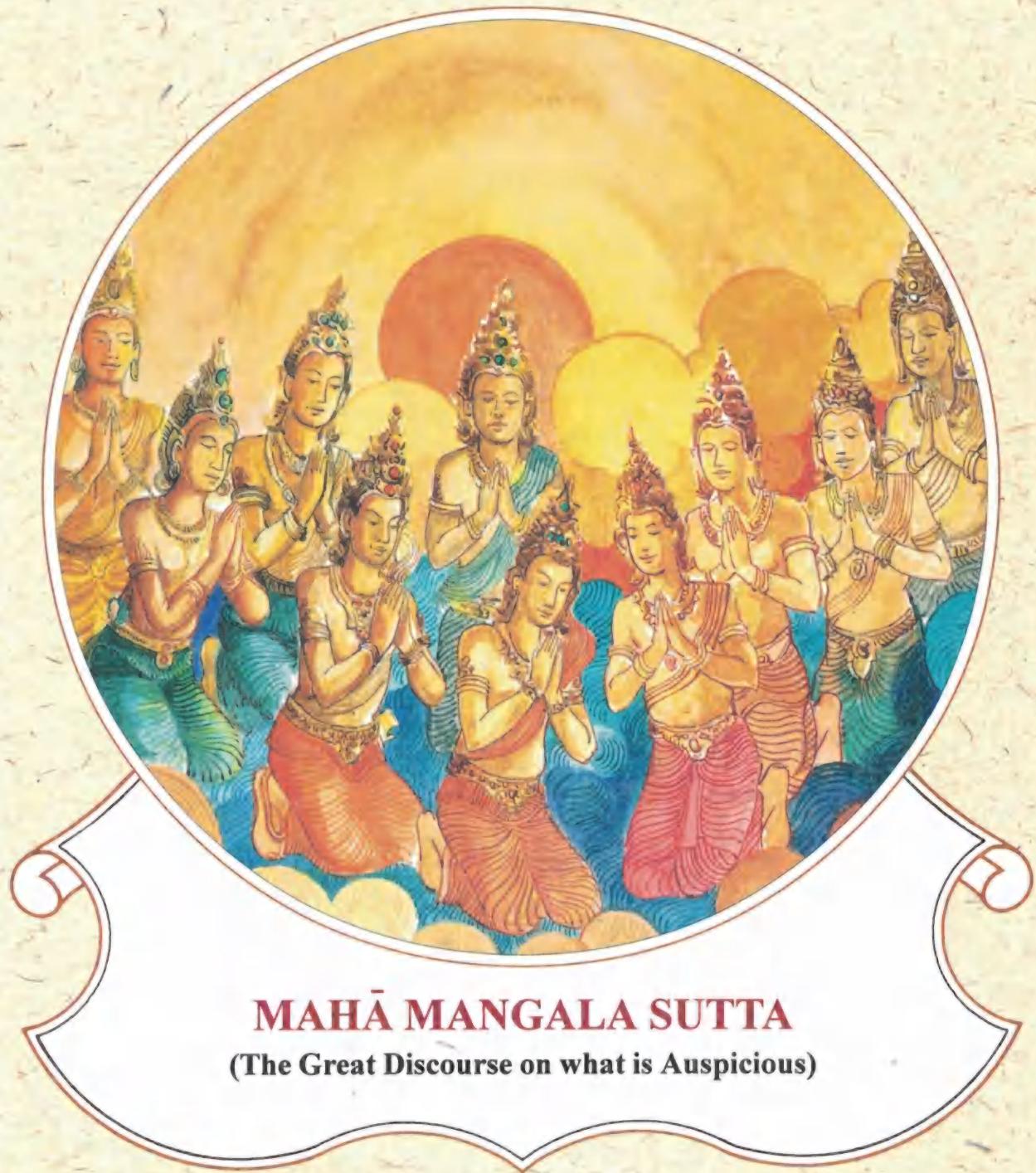
has, in consequence, universal appeal to all people everywhere. As a moral guidance to the young and old alike, this Sutta (Discourse) possesses unparalleled value.

Therefore, as President of the SBMC, I am extremely happy to present this book to all discriminating readers, irrespective of differences in religion and belief. I deem it an honour to be able to express my grateful thanks to Ven. Weragoda Sarada Maha Thero, Chief Monk SBMC, who is both sponsor and author of this publication. He has always been the beacon light illuminating our path from progress to greater progress. While extending my grateful thanks to all members of the SBMC team, I can assure our unflagging determination to sustain our efforts to uphold and spread abroad the Teachings of the Buddha, for the benefit of the whole of mankind.

With mettā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Woon Chee".

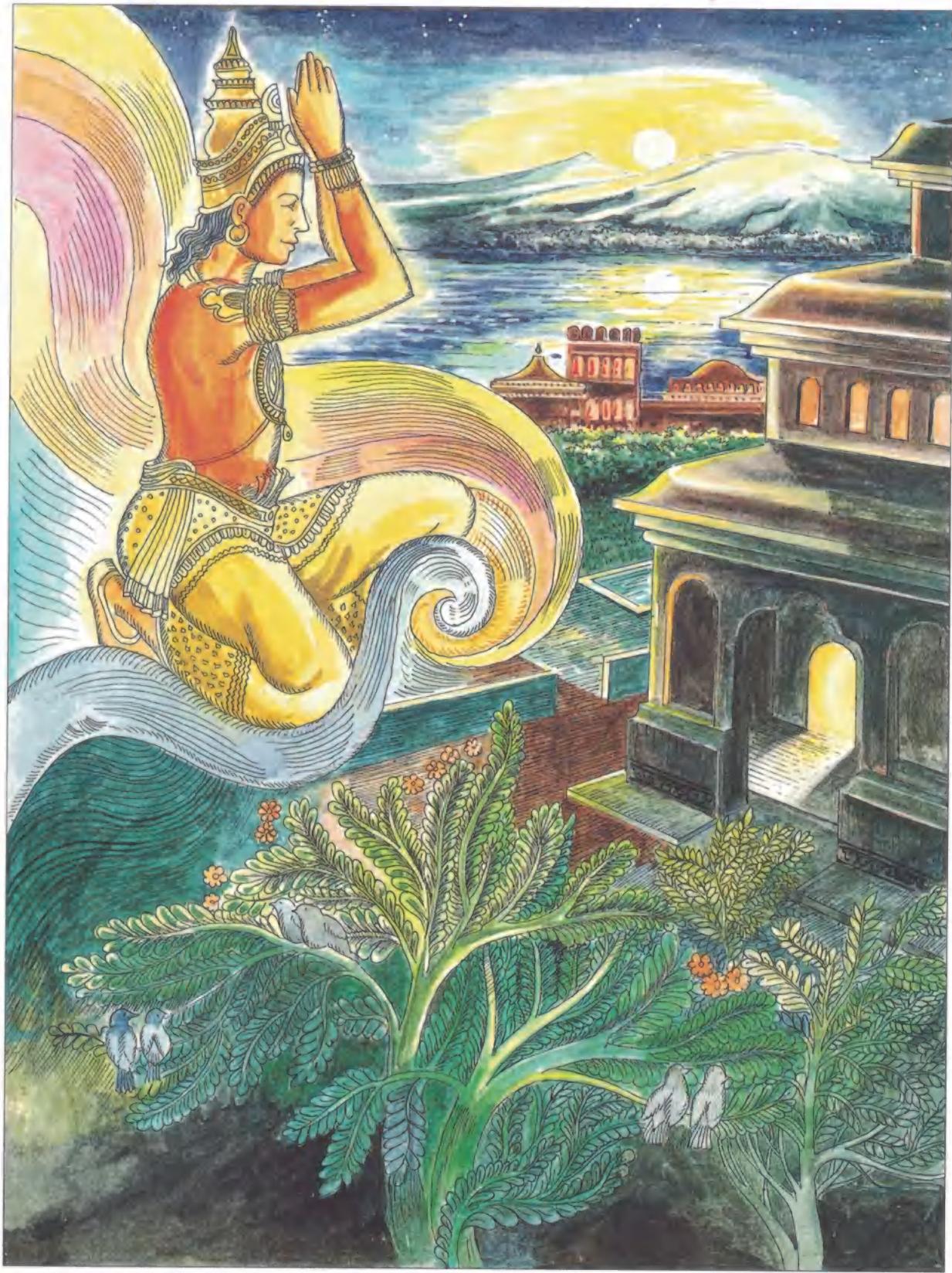
Sito Woon Chee
President SBMC



MAHĀ MANGALA SUTTA
(The Great Discourse on what is Auspicious)

Atha kho aññatarā devatā
abhikkantāya rattiyā abhikkantavannā
kevalakappam Jetavanam obhāsetvā

A certain deity, illuminating the whole of Jetavana, came late at night.



INTRODUCTION

HIGHEST BLESSINGS

The Discourse on Highest Blessings

Those who are given to superstitious beliefs, interpret various events, persons and things either as good or bad.

Some signs seen in the morning on waking up or sights one sees when setting out on a journey, or else what one sees at the start of an important enterprise could be either auspicious or inauspicious depending on how one is attuned to think about them. Breezes bearing sweet smells, pots that are full, delicious fruits, flowers in bloom, beautiful maidens full of pleasant words, white umbrellas, majestic elephants are deemed auspicious, by some cultures.

If people get entrenched in the view that, these auspicious objects spell success and those considered bad omens bring evil results, they get enslaved by superstition. They lose their initiative. They become a prey to irrational fears.

The Buddha, the Supremely Enlightened One, made people shun these irrational superstitions, and directed them towards the path of self-reliance. When superstitions are discarded men and women begin to realize the constructive power of their own minds.

In those far off days when the scientific attitude of mind was restricted to a few enlightened men and women, the generality of people was driven to ignorant states of mind.

In the days of the Buddha, the search for what is auspicious became a mass obsession. One group of people held the view that seeing good things was auspicious. A second group thought, hearing good words and pleasant sounds constituted the auspicious. To a third group, good smells were auspicious.

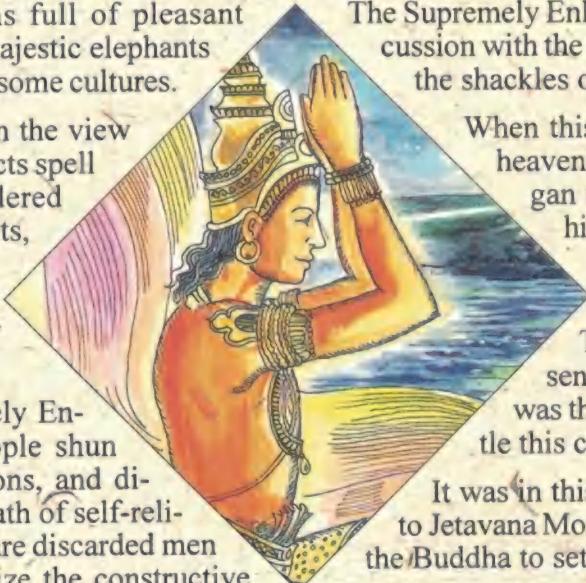
This tremendous uproar about what was really the highest blessing and the most auspicious, spread to the worlds of gods.

In addition to all this there was yet another incident that roused the masses into thinking about the highest blessings in life.

Once, a brahmin discovered that one of his valuable garments had been nibbled by mice. Now, the prevalent superstition was that it was highly inauspicious to wear a garment nibbled by mice.

Frightened by this ill-omen, the Brahmin threw away his valuable garment into a cemetery. The Buddha picked it up. On hearing this the Brahmin was deeply disturbed, lest some harm will befall the Buddha. He saw the Buddha to try and persuade him, to shun the garment which was evil.

The Supremely Enlightened One had a long discussion with the Brahmin and freed him from the shackles of superstition.



When this human uproar reached the heavenly abodes, the gods, too, began to think about what was the highest blessing. Even the gods could not decide what was auspicious.

They decided that they should send a deity to the Buddha as He was the only person who could settle this controversy.

It was in this way that a deity came over to Jetavana Monastery at Savatthi, to request the Buddha to settle this matter.

In response to the deity's request, the Buddha set down his views about the highest blessings, in the **Mahā Mangala Sutta** - (The Great Discourse on What is Auspicious).

The **Mahā Mangala Sutta** (The Great Discourse on What is Auspicious) occurs in the **Sutta Pitaka** (The Basket of Discourses). It is part of the collection entitled **Suttanipāta** (Collection of Discourses). This **Suttanipāta** is the fifth item of the Minor Collection (**Khuddaka Nikāya**).

Throughout the Buddhist world this Discourse on what is auspicious is quite popular. In Sri Lanka, on many occasions the **Suttas** (Discourses) are ceremonially chanted. During such rituals there are three Discourses that are mandatory to be chanted. "**Mahā Mangala Sutta**" (The Great Discourse on what is Auspicious) is invariably included in this group of three Discourses.

**Yena Bhagavā ten'upasamkami
upasamkamitvā sā devatā Bhagavantam gāthāya ajjhabhāsi**

Coming to the presence of the Blessed One, the deity addressed
the Blessed one in a Stanza.



HIGHEST BLESSINGS

This Discourse consists of twelve (12) stanzas, prefixed by a prose introduction.

Thirty-eight (38) Blessings are identified in these Stanzas. The First Stanza is the question raised by the deity who visited the Enlightened One at Jetavana Monastery.

The last Stanza - Stanza 12 - indicates the results that accrue to those who pursue the blessings enumerated by the Buddha in this Discourse.

The moral virtues so effectively presented by the Buddha in this Discourse, have received the highest praise of all - irrespective of cleavages of caste, creed and race, as these are universally acceptable.

Mahā Mangala Sutta (The Discourse on the Highest Blessings) could, in sum, be described as the grammar of Human Virtue.

The above Introductory observations could be summed up this way.

If views are consulted about the best known of the Buddha's sermons, it is almost certain that **Mahā Mangala Sutta** will be rated the most popular. It is the first of the three **parittāna** (protective) chants that are generally included in ceremonies and rituals, both worldly and religious.

The commentaries state that in the days of the Buddha, people were agitated by a controversy regarding what was auspicious. Some said it was auspicious to see good things. Yet, others felt, having to hear pleasant sounds was auspicious. A third group assumed that sweet smells were auspicious. The human controversy eventually reached the worlds of gods. While the controversy was raging, a deity came to see the Buddha at Jetavana Monastery, late one night. The deity asked the Buddha to resolve the controversy by explaining what was really auspicious.

The Buddha delivered **Mahā Mangala Sutta** (The Great Discourse on What is Auspicious) in response to the question put to Him by the deity who visited Him during the very late hours of the night. The Discourse is distinguished by moral guidelines that direct men to a life of high virtue. What is really significant about these directives is the fact that, if they are scrupulously lived, social harmony and human welfare would be ensured.

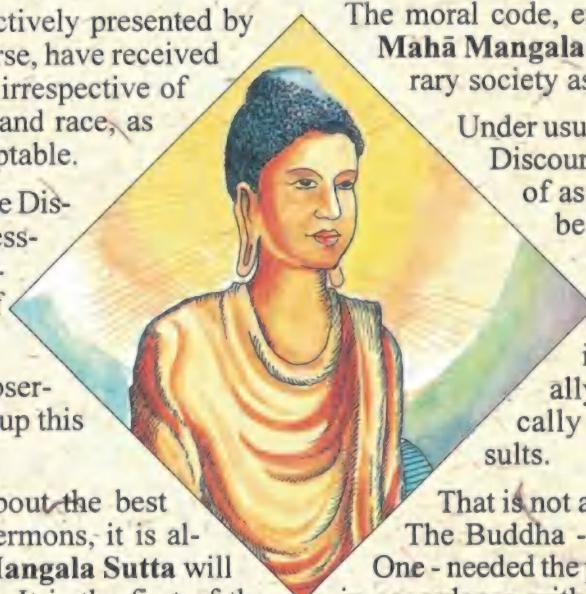
The moral code, expounded by the Buddha in **Mahā Mangala Sutta** is valid for contemporary society as it was for the Buddha's day.

Under usual circumstances, most of the Discourses of the Buddha are thought of as material to be chanted or to be heard only. The same attitude applies to this **Mahā Mangala Sutta** as well. People tend to believe that if this Discourse is ceremonially chanted, it will automatically bring about auspicious results.

That is not at all what the Buddha meant. The Buddha - the Supremely Enlightened One - needed the people to lead their daily lives in accordance with what is being taught in this Discourse.

The total Teaching of the Buddha is predominantly a way of life. **Mahā Mangala Sutta**, too, is a moral code that has to be lived. It is with that view that the devotees should absorb what the Buddha has set down in this Discourse, the ultimate aim of which is the achievement of Liberation.

In this Discourse, the Buddha solved a problem that had troubled men and gods alike, over a considerable period of time. This Discourse totally sets aside the superstitions surrounding the views regarding what is auspicious. This establishes the fact that the virtues achieved by people by their own effort are the true blessings.



Asevanāca Bālānam

Not keeping company with the Ignorant
Those who indulge in the five forms of sins and ten varieties of unskilled
action, should not be associated.



W. K. Karmal

Not keeping Company with the Ignorant

In literal terms the significance of the expression "Asevanāca bālānam" is "not keeping company with, or not associating with, the ignorant". The word 'bālā' implies the foolish.

The instruction embodied in this statement is that, one should not seek the company of the ignorant. By implication it states that it is folly to follow the ignorant, taking them as the model for proper behaviour.

One's character reflects the nature of those people he keeps company with. If one keeps company with the ignorant, one, in turn, becomes foolish and unwise.

The ignorant are characterized by three main factors. Their thoughts are evil. They speak evil words. In their action, they are evil.

It is difficult for a person to associate with the foolish and the ignorant, without one becoming contaminated.

As the ignorant are aware only of unwholesome ways, associating with that kind of individual invariably spells one's doom. The company of the ignorant will invariably bring about the downfall of those who sought association with them.

In Buddhist terms a foolish person can be defined as an individual given to five forms of evil action and ten forms of unskilled action.

Therefore, the Buddha stated that the first form of high blessing is not keeping company with the foolish.

The Pāli word used to signify the ignorant or the foolish, is "bālā". This word also means the young - the children. Young people are physically weak - mentally immature. They are not fully developed in body and mind. Therefore, they can do foolish things.

They are capable of irrational stupid actions. Their behaviour is unrefined and illogical.

But, here 'bālā' is used to denote people who are ignorant, foolish, irrational, crude and wicked, though they may be mature in body and in years. Their actions are unwholesome and evil. They lack a sense of discrimination. In Buddhist terms, they are not aware of Dhamma - The Teachings of the Buddha. They do not heed what is taught by the Buddha. They will resort to action without any regard for its consequences.

It is highly risky to keep the company of such people. In this context this word "bālā" does not refer to the young or to the children.

The young and the children are quite lovable. They are totally good and pleasant.

But "bālā"-the wicked, ignorant people are totally harmful.

Associating with them can lead only to harm.

Therefore, not keeping company with such foolish, ignorant persons, is a high blessing - indeed an auspicious thing.

The Buddha has classified this as the first Blessing - the first among auspicious things.

An ignorant or foolish person is a being who creates sins or wrongful actions. Given this situation anyone who keeps his company cannot escape being an evil-doer himself. Even children from very fortunate families deteriorate because of the bad company they keep.

Wise people totally shun the company of the ignorant. Once, when the aspirant Buddha was born as a Pandit (wise one) by the name of Akirthi, he requested the King of Gods that he should be given the privilege of not seeing ignorant, foolish persons.



Paññitānañca Sevanā

Keeping Company with the Wise

The wise are those persons who do not commit a crime either by body, by word or by mind.



PANDITĀNAÑCA SEVĀ

Keeping company with the wise

A learned man or a wise man is distinguished by three factors. A learned man's thoughts are virtuous. He speaks good and pleasant words. He speaks kindly and profitably. The actions of a wise person are wholesome.

If an individual were to keep company with virtuous people, he will invariably become a good person himself.

When one associates with wise persons he is never led astray. He will always succeed in achieving good.

The guidance provided by a wise man results in benefits during this birth and in the births to come.

If one were to keep company with a wise person, one invariably becomes wise, oneself.

The Pāli word "Panditā", denotes wise people. They are mature in mind. Their thoughts, therefore, are virtuous.

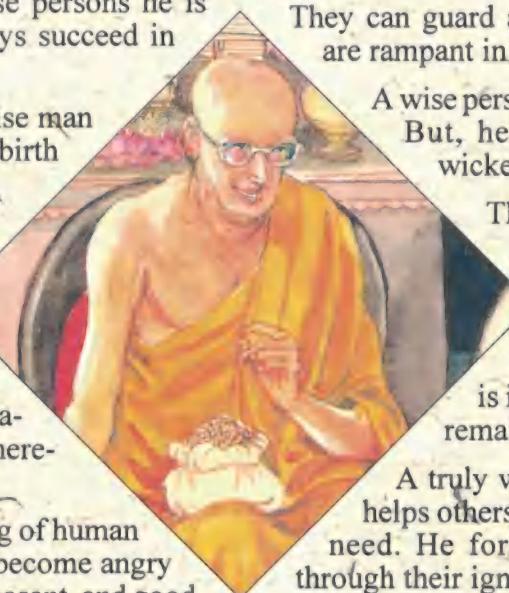
They have a great understanding of human nature. Therefore, they do not become angry with people. Their words are pleasant, and good.

As their actions stem from good thoughts, what they do is also good. When you keep company with wise people, you do not listen to harmful, bad words. On the other hand you get the opportunity to listen to good advice. These wise people speak rationally.

Their words are well thought-out. They think nothing but noble thoughts. They never think in terms of harming people. Their minds are clear. In consequence, their thoughts are not confused. Their behaviour is disciplined. They are capable of exerting self-control. As their conduct is virtuous, people develop an affection for them.

They can conquer evil. They are capable of subduing sinful thoughts.

Their wisdom keeps on growing. They are full of loving-kindness. They are compassionate towards men, animals and nature.



They are not affected by the evil that is around them. They are not tempted to follow evil ways.

They can live among all kinds of people - both good and bad. They are like the lotus that grows out of the water, but is untouched by water.

Their good thoughts flow towards evil-doers, making even the bad people virtuous. But, on the other hand, the evil ways of wicked people do not affect the wise ones.

They can guard against the wicked ways that are rampant in the world outside.

A wise person can live among the wicked, But, he is never touched by their wicked ways.

They always lead a contented life. They are not given to extremes.

Even when the world outside is confused, disturbed and is in turmoil, the wise person can remain calm and unruffled.

A truly wise person is not miserly. He helps others. He gives to those who are in need. He forgives those who harm him through their ignorance.

A wise person always seeks to improve his virtues. He practises good untiringly, with patience.

He looks after his parents, brothers, sisters and his friends.

He never takes life. He refrains from stealing.

He does not indulge in sensuous delights without restraint.

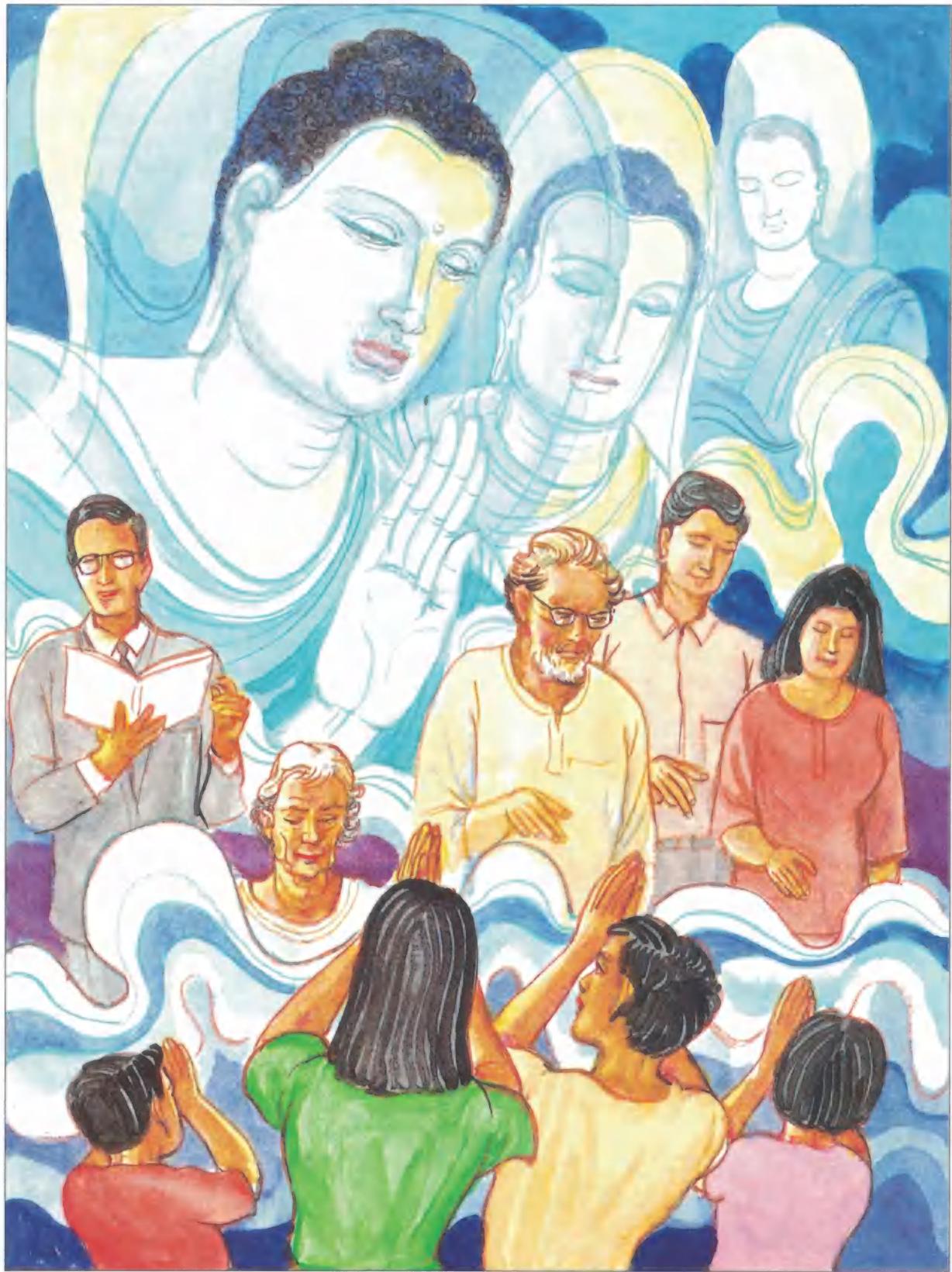
He never utters lies. He avoids intoxicants.

A truly wise person yearns always to achieve liberation.

The Buddha has indicated three characteristics of a wise person - a **Pandit**. Said the Buddha: "O Bhikkhus, there are three characteristics that distinguish a wise person. These three are as follows - O Bhikkhus, a wise person thinks only good thoughts, speaks only good words and does only good work."

Pūjāca Pūja Nīyānam

Honouring those who should be Honoured
The Buddha, Pacceka Buddhas and Arahants deserve to be honoured. Similarly
parents, teachers and elders should also be honoured.



Honouring those Worthy of Honour

When a person honours someone who is worthy of honour, that individual who gives the honour, too, gets ennobled. Honour may be given to the Buddha, the Arahants, the Bhikkhus or even to one's own parents and teachers. The individual who pays homage selects these persons because he values them and what they stand for. By his act of honouring he has appreciated their virtues. This, in turn, indicates that he, too, yearns to cultivate those high values represented by the persons honoured. Honouring those who are worthy of honour, helps the character building process.

The person who pays homage invariably seeks to cultivate a personality that is worthy of honour.

When we honour an individual, we recognize the fact that the individual honoured has helped us in some way to improve our own life.

There are some who do not quite like the idea of honouring those who should be respected. This is because of a foolish sense of pride. Such individuals will suffer, sooner or later, for their disrespect. One sure result of such disrespect is that they themselves will not be honoured by others.

Those people who do not show respect to men and women who deserve to be honoured, tend to become unpleasant persons. They destroy the beauty of life. Life is built upon honouring those who deserve to be honoured.

Imagine some simple situations. If a son or a daughter does not show respect to parents, life can be a prolonged suffering. There will always be quarrels. The harmony of the family will be lost.

It is the same with regard to other situations, too. Imagine a person who does not respect religious persons. Such a person will lack virtue, discipline and good sense.

He will be tempted to practise vices. He will harm

others and himself too, because a person who does not honour others will have no respect for one's own self.

You can respect those who deserve honour in a variety of ways. One way of respecting such a person is by worshipping him or her. We worship the Buddha and the Bhikkhus. They are our spiritual leaders. We also worship our parents, our teachers and our elders, since they guide us in life.

You can honour those who deserve to be honoured, in yet another way. When you follow their advice and obey their instructions you pay them homage.

When we respect people, we know that their advice to us is worthy of following.

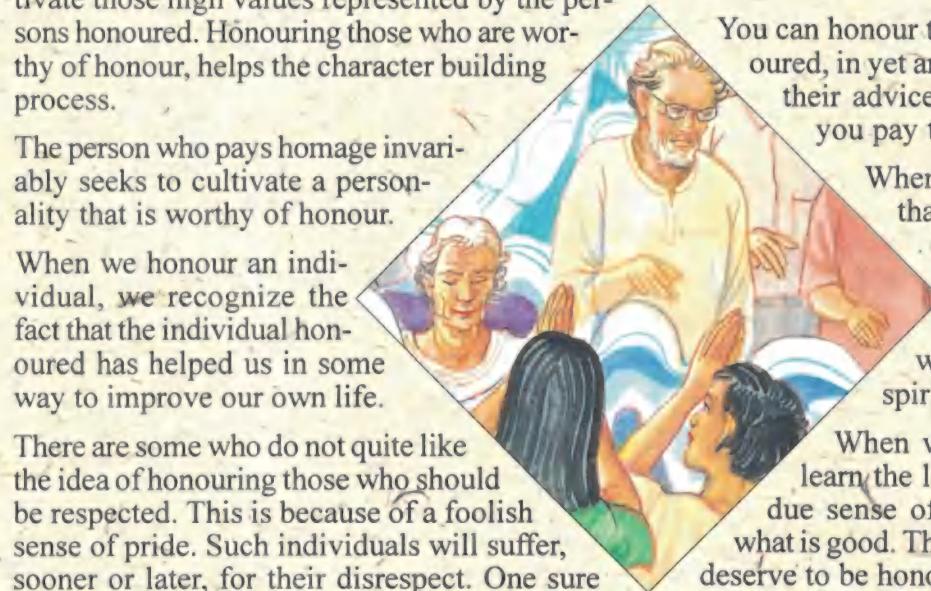
We must honour those worthy of honour both for worldly advancement and for spiritual progress.

When we honour an individual we learn the lesson of humility. Without a due sense of humility one cannot learn what is good. Therefore, honouring those who deserve to be honoured, is really a great Blessing.

The greatest person worthy of honour is the Buddha. It is said that paying homage to the Enlightened One is even greater in terms of satisfaction than becoming the emperor over the whole of Jambudīpa (India).

At worldly level people should honour their parents and adults worthy of homage. Adults are those who are one's seniors either in age or in virtue - at times in both. In the following Stanza, the good results that accrue to those who pay homage to adults are set down:

Abhivādāna sīlissa niccam
vuddhāpacāyino
cattāro dhammā vadḍhanti āyuvāṇo sukham
balam.



Patirūpa desa Vāsoca

Living in Congenial Environment

One must live in an environment where one could listen to the Dhamma and associate with wise and learned people. That environment should be a place where learning flourishes and where learned people live.



Residing in a Congenial Place

What is meant by this, is the fact that people should live in a pleasant environment. A pleasant place must be wholesome in several ways. It must be physically attractive.

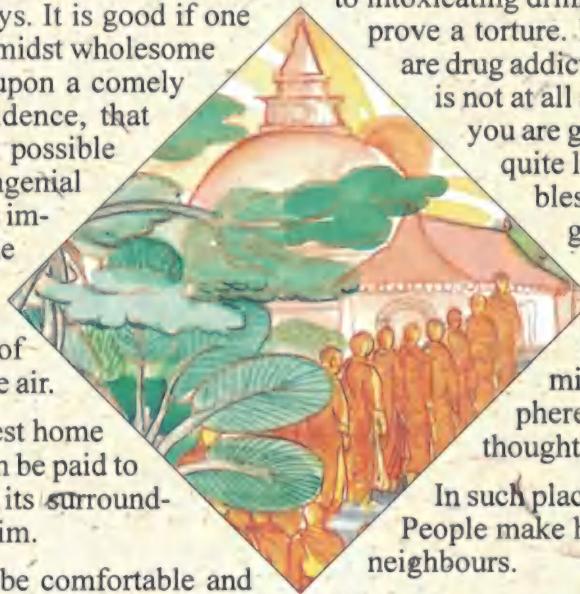
Surroundings must be conducive to good health. It is quite important that one's residence should be situated in a healthy environment. In today's context, it is difficult for most people to live in places where the air is fresh, where there are beautiful rivers, hills and valleys. It is good if one can have one's residence amidst wholesome scenery. If you can look upon a comely landscape from your residence, that will be ideal. But it is not possible for most to find such congenial places. But, one can always improve the place where one lives. People can keep their places clean and neat. They can prevent pollution of the land, of water and of the air.

One can keep even a modest home tidy and neat. Attention can be paid to maintain one's home and its surroundings in the best possible trim.

The dwelling place must be comfortable and cosy. One must refrain from discarding garbage carelessly. It is important that one should keep the water clean. The water could be a river's water, or the water in a well. Those who live by the sea must not pollute the sea.

For a place of residence to be suitable and congenial, there must be security as well.

For a residence to be fit for healthy living even the spiritual aspect is essential. One's neighbours must be disciplined people who display understanding. It must be possible to get along with the neighbours in perfect harmony. If the neighbours are quarrelsome, and are perpetually un-



ruly, living in such a context becomes an ordeal.

It is very helpful, if your place of residence is close to places of worship. If that were so, one could practise one's religious ways without much difficulty. One can always obtain proper spiritual guidance. In such a neighbourhood almost all the people will pursue meritorious activities.

If, on the other hand, the place of residence is surrounded by the houses of those who are given to intoxicating drinks, living in such a place will prove a torture. In some places, most people are drug addicts and criminals. Such a place is not at all a fit place to live. Even when you are good and virtuous, you too are quite likely to be dragged into troubles. When that happens you too get forced to be involved in those evil activities.

In some places one cannot even think straight. One's mind gets distracted. The atmosphere will be full of hatred, bad thoughts and disorderly behaviour.

In such places the sounds are unbearable. People make harsh noises and disturb their neighbours.

Some places are prone to such natural disasters as floods, earthquakes, land-slides, famines and epidemics. They are not at all wholesome places to live in.

A suitable and congenial place must be an area where one could live enjoying a sense of freedom.

Not only one's neighbourhood, but even one's own country, must be a fit place to live. If the rulers are tyrants, or dictators, living becomes difficult. This way a fit place to live must be wholesome both physically and spiritually.

Pubbeca Kata Puññatā

Possessing merit acquired in the Past
Those who have acquired merit in the past births, live happily. Some of them succeed in worldly pursuits like business enterprises. Some become affluent quite quickly. Those who have not accumulated much merit in the past births, lead unhappy lives during this birth.



PUBBE CA KATAPUÑÑATA

Merit Acquired in the Past

Buddhists believe in rebirth. In consequence, they also accept the fact that what has been done in the past affects the present life. Bad actions committed in a previous birth can bring about evil results during this birth. In the same way, the meritorious acts of the past births can bring about wholesome, pleasant results during this birth. Therefore having acquired merit in the past birth is indeed a blessing.

To a Buddhist, the process of life does not begin only with the present existence. He or she has had many previous births. The phrase "Pubbe ca Katapuññatā", has the word "Pubbe" in it. This word means the past. The past does not mean only one previous birth but a whole series of previous births. Men and women are born in various states, due to the effects of such past activities.

To have done evil in the past births is not at all a blessing. On the other hand, it is a curse, because the evil-doer will suffer for his bad actions during this birth, too.

This way, an individual who has acquired merits in the past births gets the opportunity to acquire more merits in this birth as well. In the course of one's life, one continues to perform actions. These actions are called "Kamma". Some of these actions bring immediate results. In the instance of some actions, results occur belatedly.

At death, the potentiality of one's actions does not delay, but follows into the next birth. The results of these potentialities come into effect on rebirth.

Therefore, if an individual has done good during the past birth, the results of his good action travel with him to the next birth. These results make him lead a happy and contented life on being reborn.

When a person is born with merit acquired in the past, he gets the opportunity to do good during this birth, too. This way he can continue to lead a good life in the future births as well.

The individual who has acquired merit in the past will be physically and spiritually better off than those who committed sins in the past. Those who were sinners in the past will be reborn physically and spiritually handicapped. Therefore, they cannot hope to acquire merit in this birth as well.

The Buddha has pointed out, on many occasions, how the actions of the past births affect people in the present birth.

For a person to be successful in this life in various ways, he must have acquired merit in the past. Therefore, it is a great blessing to be born with merit acquired in the past birth.

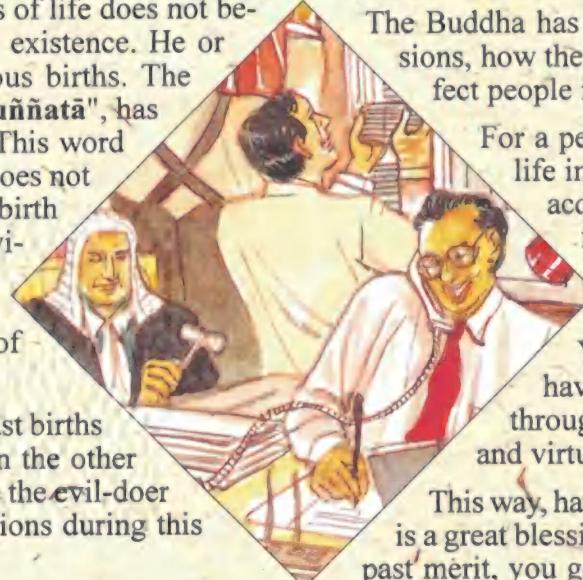
You can recognize those who have done good in the past birth through their outstanding qualities and virtues.

This way, having acquired merit in the past is a great blessing because, as a result of this past merit, you get attuned to do good during this birth as well.

A person who has acquired merit in the past births achieves happiness in the present birth. He is assured of happiness in the births to come as well.

A person who has acquired merit in the past births will have perfect presence of mind, even at the time of his death.

Even when one enjoys happiness in this birth due to the good things done in the past, people must never overlook the need to acquire merit during this birth too, to ensure that their future births, too, will be in a happy state.



Attasammā panidhi

Well-directed Self

To direct the self towards spiritual attainments one must have total control over one's mind. One must be moral, concentrated in mind and must possess high wisdom.



Directing One's Self Correctly

All human beings exist in this world. Some people make a mess of their life. They ruin themselves in a variety of ways.

There are those who get addicted to drinks and drugs that destroy their faculties. Some gamble away their fortunes and the happiness of themselves and their families.

Some take to a life of crime and end up in jail or in worse situations.

There are others who just drift along aimlessly with no particular goal in mind.

Such people have not been able to get hold of their lives. They are like rudderless boats adrift upon the water.

In contrast there are others who with discipline, understanding and proper restraint, lead wholesome lives. They are fully aware of what they want to achieve in life.

In some instances, people pursue worldly success-concentrating upon what they have decided to get. Some people follow professions, carefully planning their future. Their minds are set unswervingly upon the goals they have decided to reach. They acquire worldly successes - wealth, power, fame, prestige.

They lead family lives, in terms of the plans they have conceived. While some people direct themselves towards worldly successes, others aim at spiritual success. Through a process of strenuous training, they progress towards spiritual goals.

Success is achieved by their firm decision to progress towards a desired objective in life. Once the decision is made, they direct themselves along the right path to reach that goal.

Here, the Buddha has indicated that success has to be achieved through one's own firm sense of direction. Others can provide guidance, advice and instruction. But, winning the desired goals has to be done by one's ownself.

When an individual has his own self rightly directed, he does not waver. He does not become a prey to uncertainties and doubts. He acquires self-confidence. He does not depend upon others or external forces and phenomena. Such people who have a right sense of direction, do not follow the wrong course. They do not indulge in evil practices.

When virtuous individuals have set for themselves the right direction, they have to be perpetually alert and vigilant, to avert the possibility of going off their correct course.

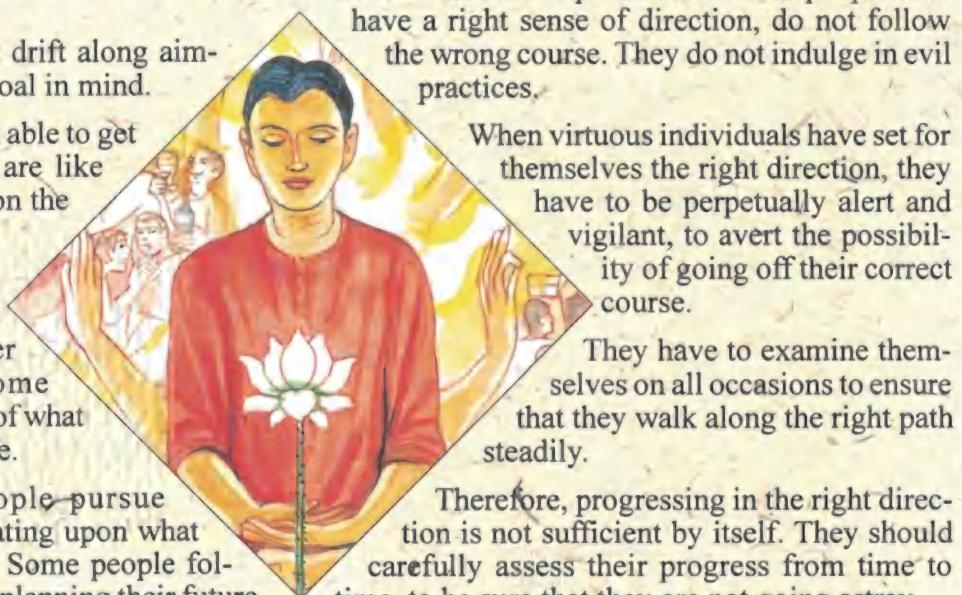
They have to examine themselves on all occasions to ensure that they walk along the right path steadily.

Therefore, progressing in the right direction is not sufficient by itself. They should carefully assess their progress from time to time, to be sure that they are not going astray.

Men and women must make a success of their life by setting for themselves the right course from the beginning.

Viewed this way, it is indeed a great blessing to be able to set one's course towards the right direction.

Even those who have strayed from the right course can once again set themselves towards this right direction. The Buddha has explained in this statement what a great blessing it is to have one's self rightly directed.



Bāhusaccañca

Extensive Learning

What helps a person to lead a successful life is the kind of knowledge he possesses. One must acquire wisdom through reading and must be aware of a vast variety of subjects.



Extensive Learning

In life, it is a great blessing to be well informed and learned. Without proper learning one cannot lead a life that is worthwhile. In those far off times, most people could acquire knowledge by listening to people who mattered. Therefore, in the past a learned person was described as a "**Bahussuta**" - an individual who has heard much.

In those ancient times, the teacher-pupil relationship was considered sacred. The pupils will sit at the feet of their master to learn a variety of things. Philosophies and religious thoughts were brought down from generation to generation through the mnemonic and oral traditions.

In such a tradition of learning the pupils had to have a sharp memory. In addition, the pupils, or those who desired to learn, had to have a keen desire to learn.

Those days, even those who were able to read, would go to learned persons and listen to their discourses to understand various issues in depth.

In the days of the Buddha, brahmins and others came to see the Enlightened One with the intention of talking to Him and listening to Him. Many such persons were so thoroughly pleased with the Teachings of the Buddha that they gave up their own faiths and became followers of the Buddha. That learning led them to enlightenment.

Learning much is an essential ingredient for successful living. What helps a person to lead a successful life is the kind of knowledge he possesses. He must acquire a good understanding about the essential issues of life. He must be aware, at least to some extent, of the nature of life, the meaning

of human action, and the purpose of an individual's life in society. He must know what to cultivate and what to avoid. He must know, above all, to instruct people in what is proper and essential. In addition, he must also learn how to accept instruction and counsel.

In the Buddha's day, many individuals wandered forth seeking spiritual knowledge.

Prince **Siddhārtha**, too, went to various religious teachers in search of spiritual truths. He was not satisfied with the knowledge he was able to gain from those teachers. Therefore, he evolved his own system of thought.

The Buddha's Enlightenment is the result of the pursuit of extensive knowledge.

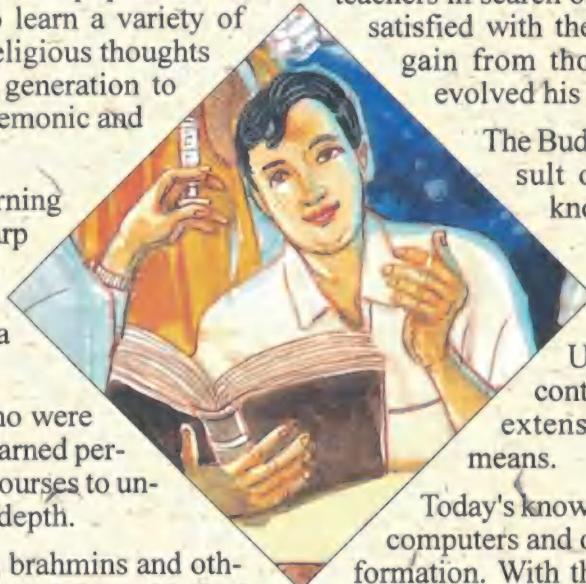
Even in the modern world, for success in life, knowledge is centrally important.

Unlike in the ancient days, in contemporary times, we can learn extensively through a variety of means.

Today's knowledge-seeker has access to the computers and other advanced sources of information. With the help of such technologies as the Internet, today's truth-seekers can acquire knowledge extremely extensively.

The moderns acquire knowledge through advanced forms of media. The modern world is brought together, with extremely fast forms of communication.

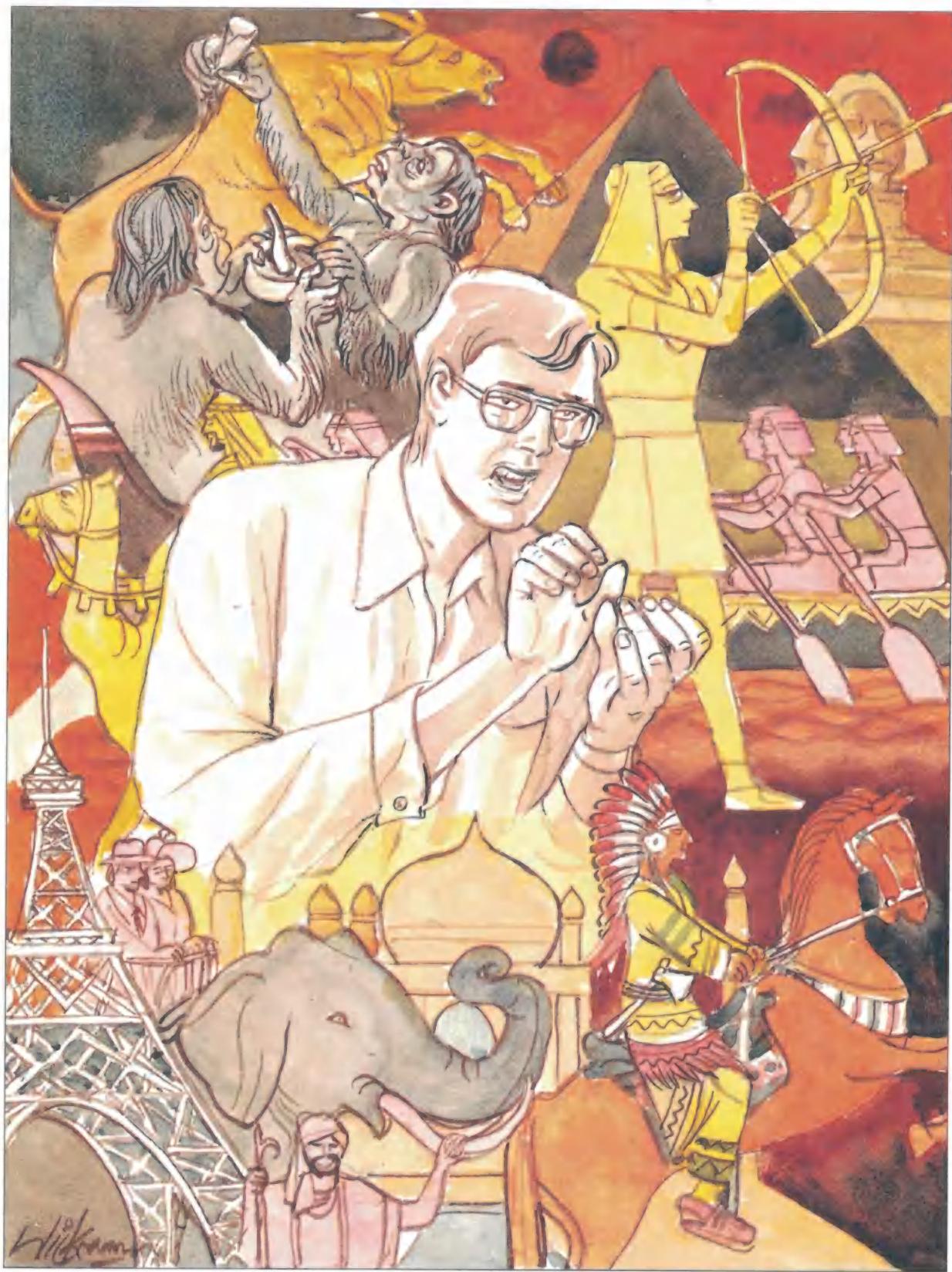
Viewed this way, extensive knowledge is important to the moderns at each and every moment. Extensive knowledge (**bāhusaccm**) is truly a great blessing.



Sippañca

Adept in Arts and Crafts

People must acquire some skill in craftsmanship, in a profession, job or a vocation. Mind and body should be co-ordinated with discipline.



Adept in Arts and Crafts

In His enumeration of what is auspicious, the Buddha states that it is a great blessing to be adept in arts and crafts. The Buddha emphasized this because it is essential that men and women should have an efficiency in some art or a handicraft.

Even in terms of modern education, the need for skills in arts and crafts is clearly recognized. Academic studies are not sufficient for an individual to be a complete human being. The "seasoning" of a person's character comes from his or her capacity to be an adept in some art or craft. Book-learning alone cannot turn a person into a useful citizen.

In ancient times, the education of even a privileged prince was not considered complete, until he acquired mastery over certain arts and crafts. Prince **Siddhārtha** learned the wisdom contained in works on philosophy and religion.

But, to be a complete Prince he had to acquire skills in arts and crafts. He was not thought of as being fit for responsible lay life until he was skilled in arts and crafts. He had to display his grasp of these in public, at an assembly of all the important persons in the kingdom.

Arts are many. Paintings, sculpture, poetry, drama, writing are all arts. An individual bereft of some, at least, of these arts is an empty person. Such an individual will lack character.

People who are efficient in various crafts do not become helpless in any situation. They can earn a livelihood under any situation. They can fend for themselves under any circumstance.

In some modern universities, the students are given leave from their academic work to enable them to go out and learn an art or craft. Some girl students work as apprentices to older women and learn some craft like quilt-making. Boys work with such skilled men as truck-drivers and learn that kind of craft.

Acquiring efficiency in an art or craft makes it possible for people to lead full lives. Those who do not have such skills waste their time in useless pursuits. They either gossip away their leisure, or resort to harmful practices.

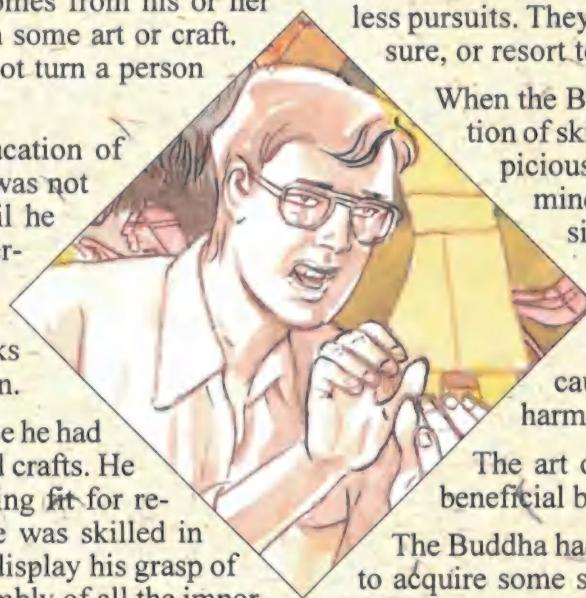
When the Buddha described the acquisition of skill in arts and crafts as an auspicious matter, He, of course had in mind those activities that are not sinful.

Some people use their leisure for hunting. This is not a wholesome activity, because in that, people invariably harm living beings.

The art or craft you choose must be beneficial both to yourself and to others.

The Buddha had directed even the Bhikkhus to acquire some skills. Some Bhikkhus in the Buddha's day were skilful robe-makers. The Buddha identified the skills in arts and crafts as an auspicious matter because such efficiencies are a blessing both to one's own self and to others.

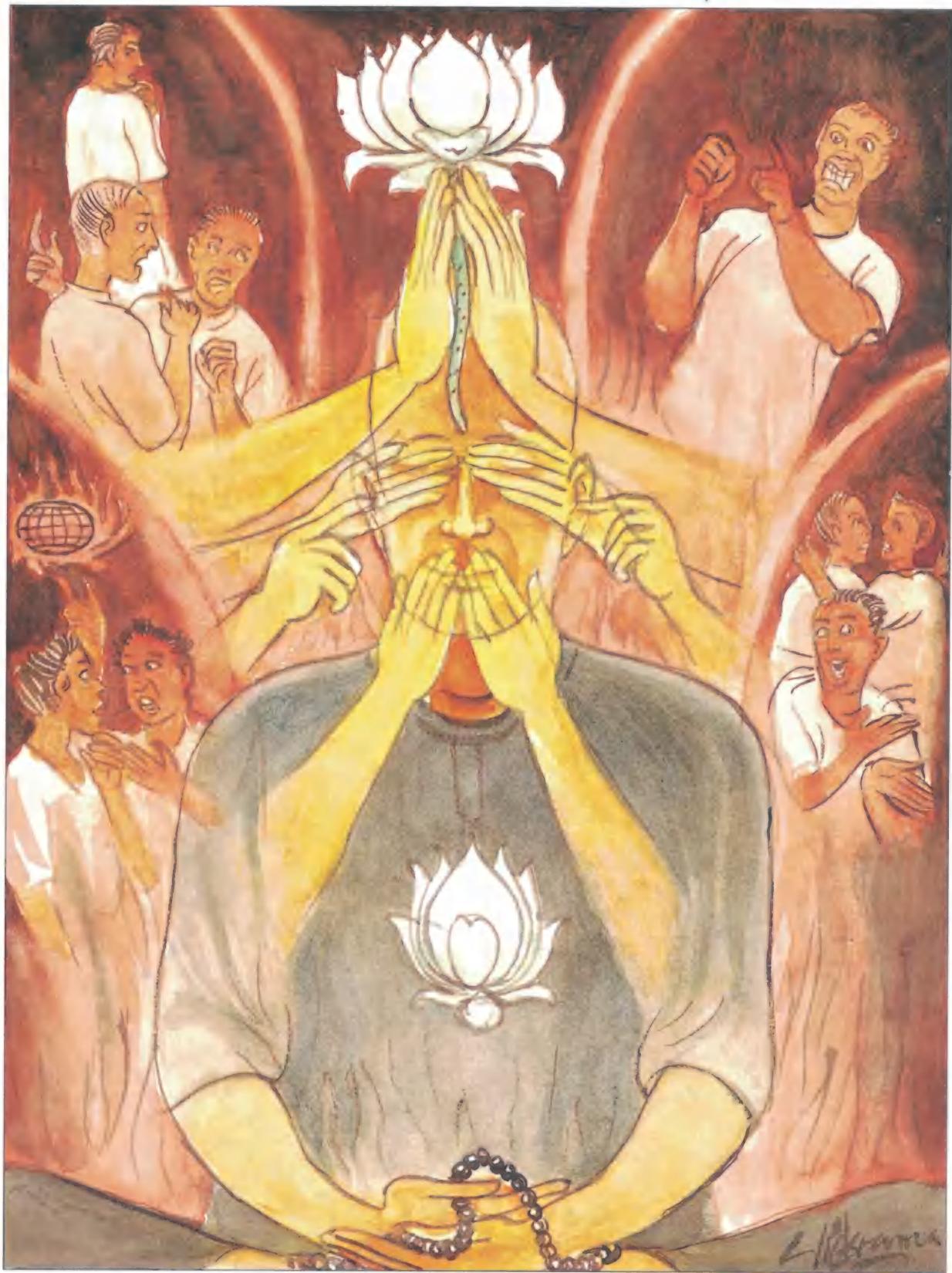
The adeptness in arts and crafts should be inculcated from childhood on, to enable people to lead efficient lives. **This way, adeptness in arts and crafts is truly a great blessing.**



Vinayo ca Susikkhito

Restraint in body and mind

Being restrained in body and mind for those who have taken to religious discipline is of primary essence. Their total dedication is to achieve higher spiritual goals.



Restraint of Body and Mind

A person who is disciplined is acceptable to all. He does not create problems for himself or for others. He does not harm any living being wilfully. He is pleasant in his ways.

The greatness of a person who is restrained and disciplined can be fully appreciated in contrast to an individual who is unruly and undisciplined. Such an individual will use harsh words. His actions will be violent and rude. His thoughts are mostly evil. His behaviour is intolerable. He has no regard for the place, the time and the person. He will go about as he wishes.

He indulges in extreme forms of behaviour. His eating habits are unrestrained; so are his social habits. He does not seem to know that there are other people in this world. He has no respect for religious people, parents, teachers or elders - simply, he does not know the proper forms of human behaviour.

In terms of the Teachings of the Buddha, a person who is not restrained and disciplined commits sins through his body, his words and through his thoughts.

Evil actions done through the body are killing of living beings, stealing and wrongful sexual behaviour.

If one is not restrained in speech one is likely to utter falsehoods, speak maliciously, use harsh words, and indulge in gossip.

The unrestrained mind tends towards covetousness, ill-will and false views.

An individual who is restrained in body, words and in thoughts is deemed by all to be an exemplary super-individual.

They are capable of great spiritual progress. Their worldly activities, too, succeed because they are

restrained in whatever they did.

The discipline of body, word and mind, is essential especially for those who have taken to a religious way of life.

Their total dedication is to achieve higher spiritual goals by disciplining their bodies, words and thoughts thoroughly and unceasingly. This does not imply at all, that a restrained way of life is needed only by those who follow a spiritual way of life.

Even for worldly purposes, restraint and discipline are very much needed. Right decisions can be arrived at primarily by those who are disciplined. Such restrained people can get along with others without conflicts. They can create an atmosphere of harmony both at home and in their place of work.

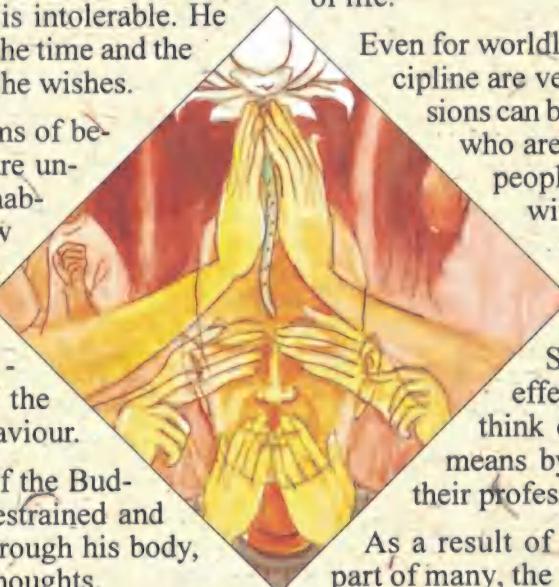
Such people can get along very effectively in a team. They can think clearly and devise ways and means by which they could improve their profession or enterprise.

As a result of the lack of restraint on the part of many, the world has become a place of violence, turmoil and trouble; conflicts arise when people are not disciplined. These conflicts can escalate into wars that destroy lives and property. Those who are disciplined are not easily angered. They do not get provoked into aggressive action.

Discipline, and restraint are qualities that preserve peace, harmony and balance in societies.

That is the reason why the Buddha categorized the restraint of body, word and mind, as being among the highest blessings.

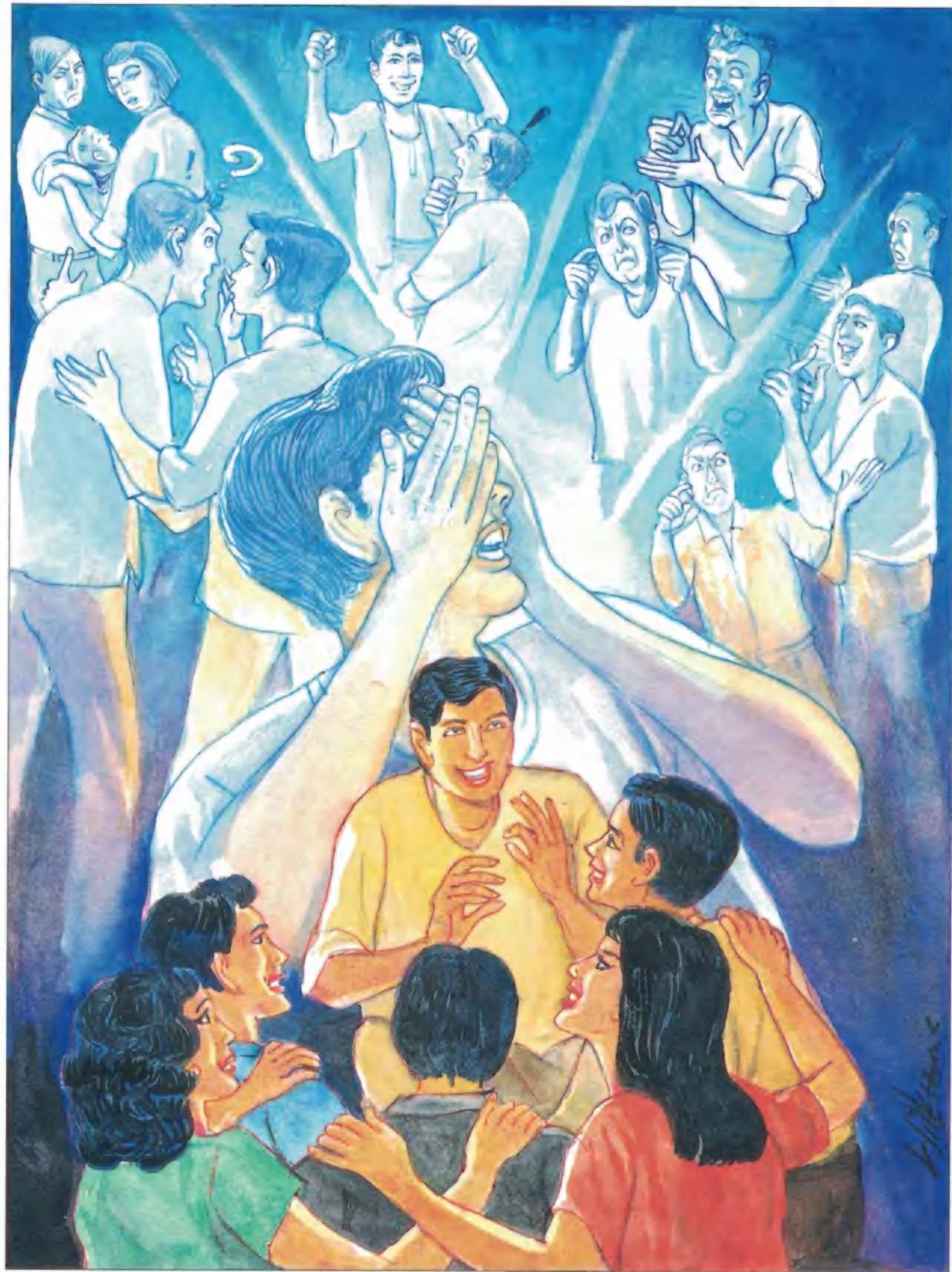
Restraint of body, word and mind, is, therefore an auspicious achievement.



Subhāsitā ca yā vācā

Pleasant speech

The spoken word is the most important medium of human communication - If words are wrongly used, it leads to quarrels, complaints and misunderstandings and even death.



Pleasantness in Speech

The spoken word is the most important medium of human communication. Speech can stir bloody revolutions. Words used with bad intentions can create untold harm.

Unpleasantness in speech brings about social disharmony.

Pleasantness in speech can have a healing effect. Even those in great pain, feel a soothing sense of relief at pleasant words. When you speak kindly to people they respond wholesomely. One can get the co-operation of both children and adults by the use of pleasant words.

Not only human beings, but even animals, respond well to kind words. In Buddhist literature there is the story of a giant bull who wanted to help his master win a lot of money.

The bull told his master that he should enter into a wager with other merchants and say that my bull will pull, all by himself, five-hundred carts strung together. High bets were placed. The merchant said to the bull - "You devil, pull the carts and win the money for me." The bull stood still without moving. His master lost his money. The bull explained to his master that he did not pull the carts as promised, because, he used bad words in addressing him.

Next time, the merchant made the same wager. On this occasion, the merchant addressed the bull this way. "My dear son, please pull these carts and win the wager for me. Please, my son, help me."

At these pleasant words, the bull pulled the carts easily and won an enormous fortune for his master.

This shows that even animals can be persuaded through pleasant words.

Men and women shun those who speak unpleasant words. Such users of unpleasant words do not have any friends.

They are not respected by good people. But those who speak pleasantly are universally adored. People invite them to their homes and to meetings. Wherever they go they are well received.

To be pleasant in speech there are several things that a person should do. He must avoid uttering falsehoods. Lying is an unpleasant act. One must not speak words that are calculated to harm other people. Those who are pleasant in speech never use harsh words. They never use words to insult others or to bring others into disrepute.

Words are very important. Therefore, one must not waste them by empty conversations.

Religious persons are trained to speak pleasant words. They are calm in their words. They address people in kind words. Their tone of voice is compassionate. They do not threaten others with harsh words.

Pleasantness in speech is helpful not only in religious activities. Even in worldly enterprises, pleasant speech brings about good results. A leader who talks to his followers in pleasant words can succeed in his pursuits, better than those who use harsh words. Parents who talk to their children in pleasant words, can bring them up to be good men and women.

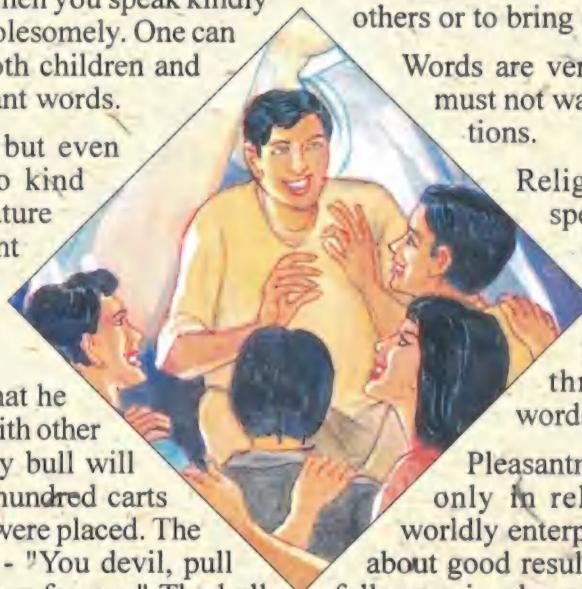
Teachers and elders who are pleasant in their speech, set a good example to the younger generation.

According to Buddhism, speech, to be considered pleasant, must have five elements in it. The words must be spoken at the right time.

Speech must be true. The words must be mild and not harsh.

Speech must be profitable. Words must be spoken with loving-kindness.

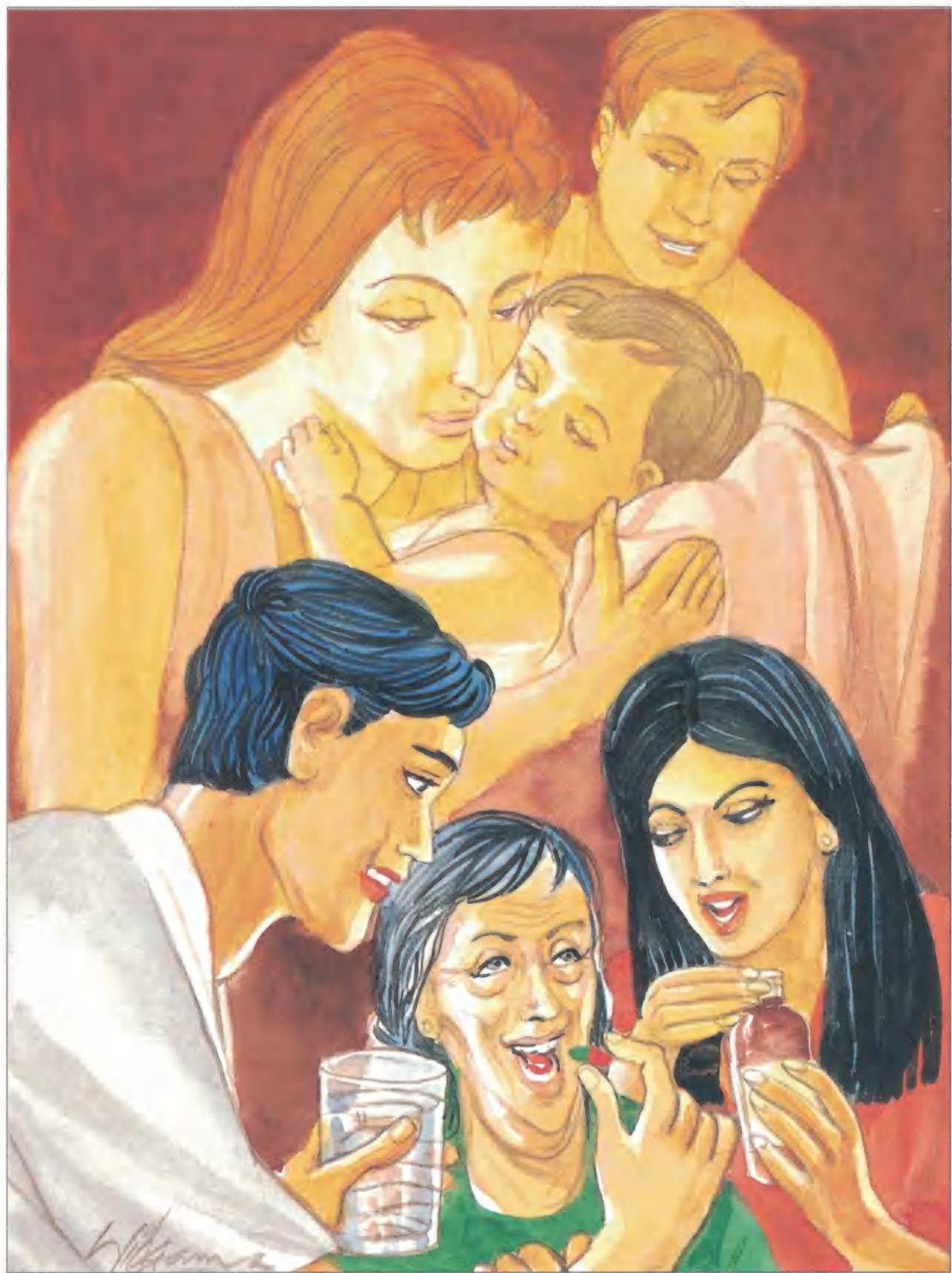
To be blessed with the capacity for pleasantness in speech, is truly auspicious.



Mātā pitū upaṭṭhānam

Caring for Parents

In all human communities caring for parents is firmly established as a cherished value. The Buddha has said that the goodness of parents is endless.



Caring for Parents

What is meant by 'caring for parents', is not only looking after them physically. There are many other ways in which they should be cared for. Parents bring up their children with tremendous love and affection. The children, too, look after them with equal love and kindness.

Giving things to them routinely is not at all sufficient. To provide parents with food, clothes and shelter is good if it is done with great love and affection. If not, such activities become mere business transactions.

Parents must be cared for not only when they are sick, but also when they are in good health.

The parents must be helped to do their religious duties. The children must see to it that their parents are happy. In some societies, the children send their aged parents to various institutions for old people. The parents are not given the care and love they deserve in the home, where those parents brought them up.

Some children do not recognize the value of their parents. In Buddhist literature the parents are described as "the Buddhas at home."

They are also described as "**pubbācariyā**" - the first teachers. This is because the children learn all the important things in life from their parents.

The care that is lavished upon children by their parents can never be returned adequately by children. The goodness of parents is endless.

Those who neglect their aged parents or treat them badly, will have to suffer the same fate when, they, in turn become parents. There is a folk-tale that illustrates this very effectively.

The young parents and their only son of eight, lived in the same house with the child's paternal grandfather. One night, the child's mother told his father that they should get rid of the old man. They decided to put the old man in a basket and take him to the jungle, in the guise of going on pilgrimage, and leave him there and come back. The

child overheard this. As decided, the father set out with the grandfather in a basket.

The child called out to his father: "Father, where are you taking my grandfather?" "I am taking him on pilgrimage" "All right, but remember to bring back the basket, as I, too, will want to take you on pilgrimage when you grow old."

This shows that unless you care for your parents, you cannot get your children to care for you.

The aged parents who gave everything they had, to their children, deserve to be looked after by these children who benefited from the godliness of parents.

Allowing parents to suffer in their old age is a human crime of great magnitude.

But, the Buddhists are especially taught to take adequate care of their parents.

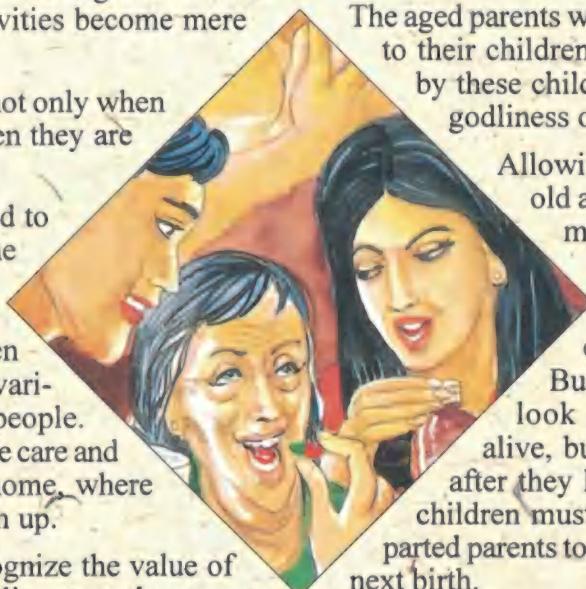
Buddhist children must not only look after them when they are alive, but also should care for them after they have passed away. Buddhist children must transfer merits to their departed parents to ensure a happy status in their next birth.

Dutiful children must look upon their parents as a great opportunity given to them to acquire merit.

This way, caring for parents is a Great Blessing.

Parents are described in some contexts as 'Brahma' - highest of beings. The parents suffer untold privations to bring up their children. They feed their children, even if they have to starve. They give away whatever they had earned, to their children.

Said the Buddha : "O Bhikkhus, parents are of tremendous help to their children. They protect the lives of their children. They nourish the children. Parents showed the children what the world is. There are no other people in the whole world, who help children as their parents. Children can never pay back their debt to them adequately. Therefore, children are perpetually indebted to their parents.



Putta dārassa Sangaho

Cherishing of children and spouse

It is an essential human duty to cherish children and spouse. To preserve the well-being of the family, children and spouse should be adequately cared for.



PUTTADARASSA SANGAHO

Cherishing One's Children and one's Spouse

Human society has the "family" as the main unit of social organization. Family life is built upon a series of obligations. If these obligations and duties are not honoured, the family unit breaks down.

All human beings recognize the duty to look after and cherish one's children and one's spouse. Since the family is the basic unit of social organization in any human community, if the family breaks down the whole social system gets disturbed. To preserve the family unit intact, the persons who centrally matter in the family must look after their duties.

A major obligation is to cherish one's children. If due care is not lavished upon the children - if they are not adequately looked after, the children are quite likely to grow up in an unwholesome manner. When they do not receive the care and attention they need, they go astray.

They develop anti-social forms of behaviour. They begin, at first, to rebel against their own parents and later against the whole society.

When parents look after their children with due care they, in turn, develop a love of their family. They begin to love their parents and their sisters and brothers.

One must also look after one's spouse. If there is conflict between parents, they will not be able to fulfil their duty by their children.

In a family when there is disharmony between parents, the children grow up in whatever way they want. The children become disobedient. They take to various forms of crime. The family begins to break up. In such families, there is very little opportunity for a child's healthy growth.

In some of the countries in the west, the family unit is fast disintegrating. Urgent measures have to be taken to restore family harmony.

The Buddha has indicated in the course of His

Discourses the need to preserve family harmony.

In **Sigālovāda Sutta**, (The Discourse given as Advice to Sigala), the Buddha has detailed out the manner in which the husband should look after the wife and in turn how the wife should look after her husband.

For a person to be able to cherish one's children and one's spouse, initially there should be a tremendous amount of understanding.

When there is true understanding, no action will get misinterpreted.

The children will always follow the example of their parents. If the parents, are quarrelsome, the children too will acquire that way of life.

When there is love and understanding between parents the children too will begin to follow their example.

A family can function in harmony and unity, when the children and the spouse are cherished.

The Buddha stated that looking after children and the spouse is a great blessing.

In the modern world, when one can see the evils of broken families, one can indeed see why the Buddha declared such family harmony as very auspicious.

Parents must care for their children and nourish them. It is their natural and social duty. Parents have to render five forms of duties to their children. They are : Preventing children from straying into sinful ways; directing them towards what is good; teaching them arts and crafts; arranging suitable spouses for them; and transferring their wealth to children in due time.

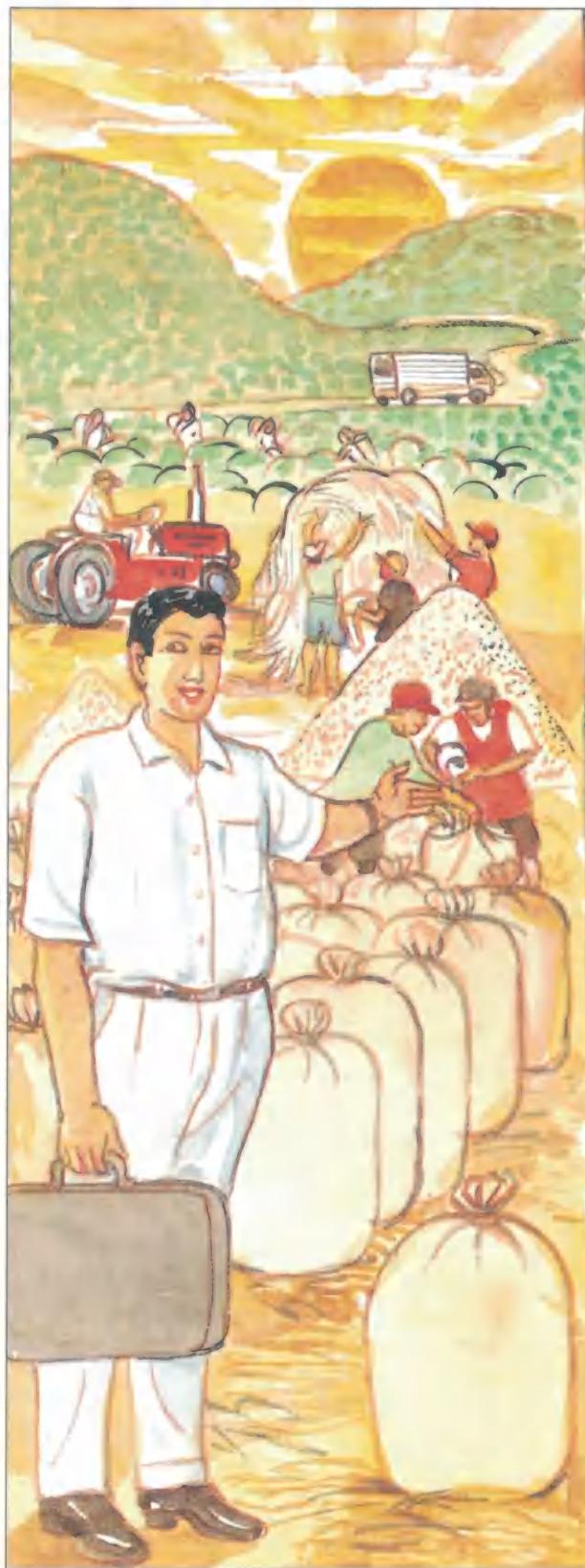
A husband must look after his wife in several ways. Addressing her in polite and kind words is one of the foremost duties of a husband towards his wife. A wife in turn, too, must care for her husband in various ways.



Anākulā ca Kammantā

Blameless vocation

The profession, job or vocation one pursues should be blameless. One's vocation should not harm society or one's own self.



ANĀKULĀ CA KAMMANTĀ

Blameless Vocation

The Buddha described "blameless vocation" as a high blessing. It is necessary to examine what kind of vocation is blameless. The Pāli word used to denote 'vocation' is 'Kammanta'.

This word can be interpreted as activities, livelihood, deeds, jobs, work or occupations. Even forms of business can be described as "kammanta". In effect, activities that people indulge in either to earn a living or to pass their time can be categorized as "Kammanta".

People are engaged in all kinds of professions, occupations and jobs. But, according to this statement, such activities should be "anākula"- blameless.

"Anākula" also implies that which does not bring about conflicts or confusion.

Human life is full of disturbances and turmoils. Men and women are tossed about by hatred, greed, jealousy and such other unwholesome attitudes. These disturbances and conflicts bring about suffering.

Therefore it is the human duty of men and women to pursue ways of life that are not conducive to conflicts and to see to it that human suffering is reduced.

It must be the objective in life of all human beings to contribute towards social harmony and not to increase the conflicts that are already there.

Wherever possible people must select ways of life that do not harm the well-being of society.

In Buddhist terms such activities as arms deals, selling and brewing intoxicating drinks, selling poisons are all occupations that are blame-worthy. People must refrain from those. Buddhists must especially refrain from harmful occupations.

When you pursue a job or a profession in a blameless manner, you must ensure that the work is done

in order to bring about the highest possible benefit to all.

One's professional and job practices too must be blameless. Being a merchant or a trader is a blameless occupation, if you deal in only harmless commodities. One must also ensure that the deals are clean. If, for instance, the goods are sold underweight, it is not a blameless practice. If the quality of goods is unacceptable that too is not blameless.

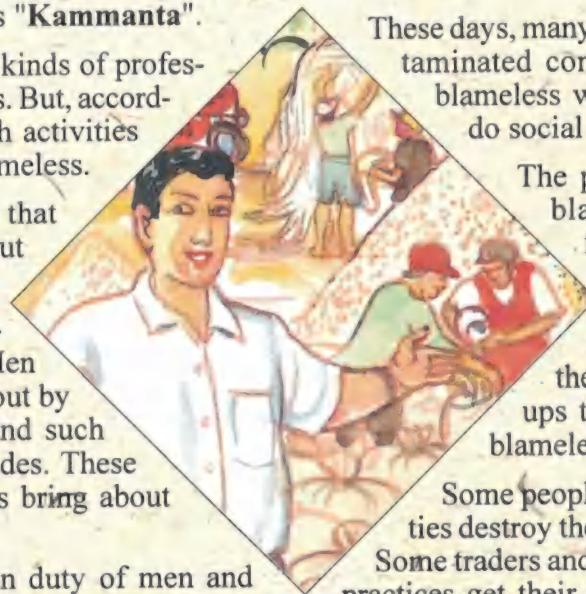
These days, many food-items sold are in a contaminated condition. This is not at all a blameless way of life. Such individuals do social harm deliberately.

The practice of doing a job in a blameless manner must start from childhood on. If children are taught to do various childhood activities in a manner that will not harm themselves or others, as grown-ups they will learn to indulge in blameless activities.

Some people who pursue harmful activities destroy the future of their own children. Some traders and merchants pursuing harmful practices get their sons and daughters to assist them in such activities. This is yet another problematic outcome of vocations that are not blameless.

The Buddha described "blameless vocations" as being among highest blessings because the good influences of a blameless vocation affect the whole of society.

An uncluttered form of livelihood is an activity that has been well organised to derive the expected benefits. Actions get disorganised when work is not done in due time, when what is done is not systematic and when things are done with no enthusiasm. Proper actions yielding good results come from the regard for the proper times, methodical arrangement of various phases of the project, and unflagging effort.



Dānañca

Generosity and Charity

By giving, one achieves the discipline of selflessness. Generosity helps to allay human misery.



Generosity and Charity

Dāna" literally means giving. But, it has a whole series of implications. This does not mean mere charity. You give alms, presents and gifts. This is, of course, dāna.

When you offer meals and other requisites to religious persons, it is dāna.

To be able to give, people must have a generous attitude of mind. If a person gives because he or she is pressurized to do so, it is not proper 'dāna'. It becomes a routine matter in which men's heart is not quite present.

For an act of giving to be real charity, it must come from a true sense of generosity.

The state of mind of the giver is quite important. One must give with a sense of joy. For an act of giving to be really fruitful, the intention behind that act of giving must be pure.

The selfish intention mars the quality of an act of giving. If you give with the intention of receiving a return, it is a business transaction. The spiritual quality is not there.

The giver must think only of the need of the person who receives. It is only then that giving becomes a wholesome act.

Giving does not imply only material gifts. One may donate food, clothing and shelter. One may give things that are necessary for material well-being.

But, kindness, too, can be 'dāna'. If you give a kind word to a person, that too is dāna. The friendly smile can also be a form of dāna.

Generosity also means, perfect understanding. If one can forgive a person for a wrong done, there too, we have 'dāna'.

Some people speak harshly to their servants or to their staff. Instead, if they can speak kindly, that too becomes a gift. A true gift gives a sense of

happiness and relief to a receiver. Therefore, even a pleasant word is a great gift.

In a religious situation, the lay people are under obligation to offer dāna to bhikkhus. This is a high spiritual gift. When we offer alms to religious persons, we help them in their effort to achieve liberation. Therefore, by our offer of alms, we, too, have become partners in that spiritual effort.

As for religious persons they always give words of advice. They give the gift of Dhamma. This is a very high gift, because it helps people to end suffering and achieve liberation. That is the reason why the Buddha has stated "Sabba dānam dhamma dānam jināti", (Gift of Truth excels all gifts).

Buddhists must consider our total attitude towards people as a dāna. Wherever we go we must give kindness, good cheer, happiness and joy.

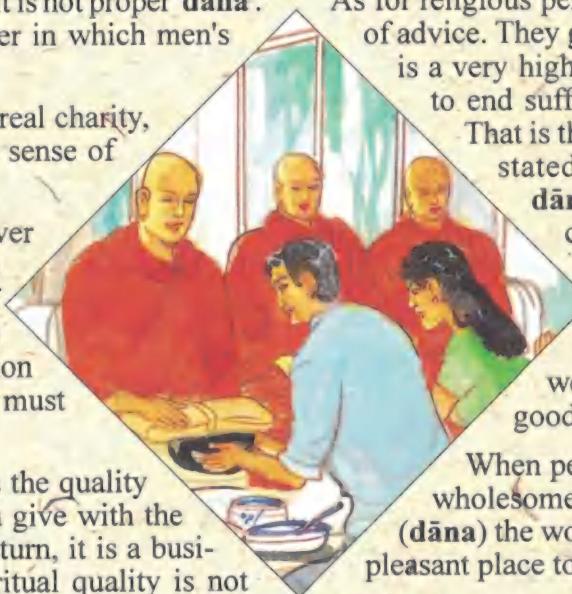
When people get used to the idea that wholesome living is a process of giving (dāna) the world will become an extremely pleasant place to live in.

That is the reason why the Buddha described dāna (giving) as a great blessing and an auspicious activity.

The results of generosity and charity are manifold. In a Buddhist commentary the results of generosity are described this way :

Pitimudārām vindati dātā,
gāravamasmiṇ gacchati loke
kittimanantam yāti ca dātā
vissasanīyo hoti ca dātā

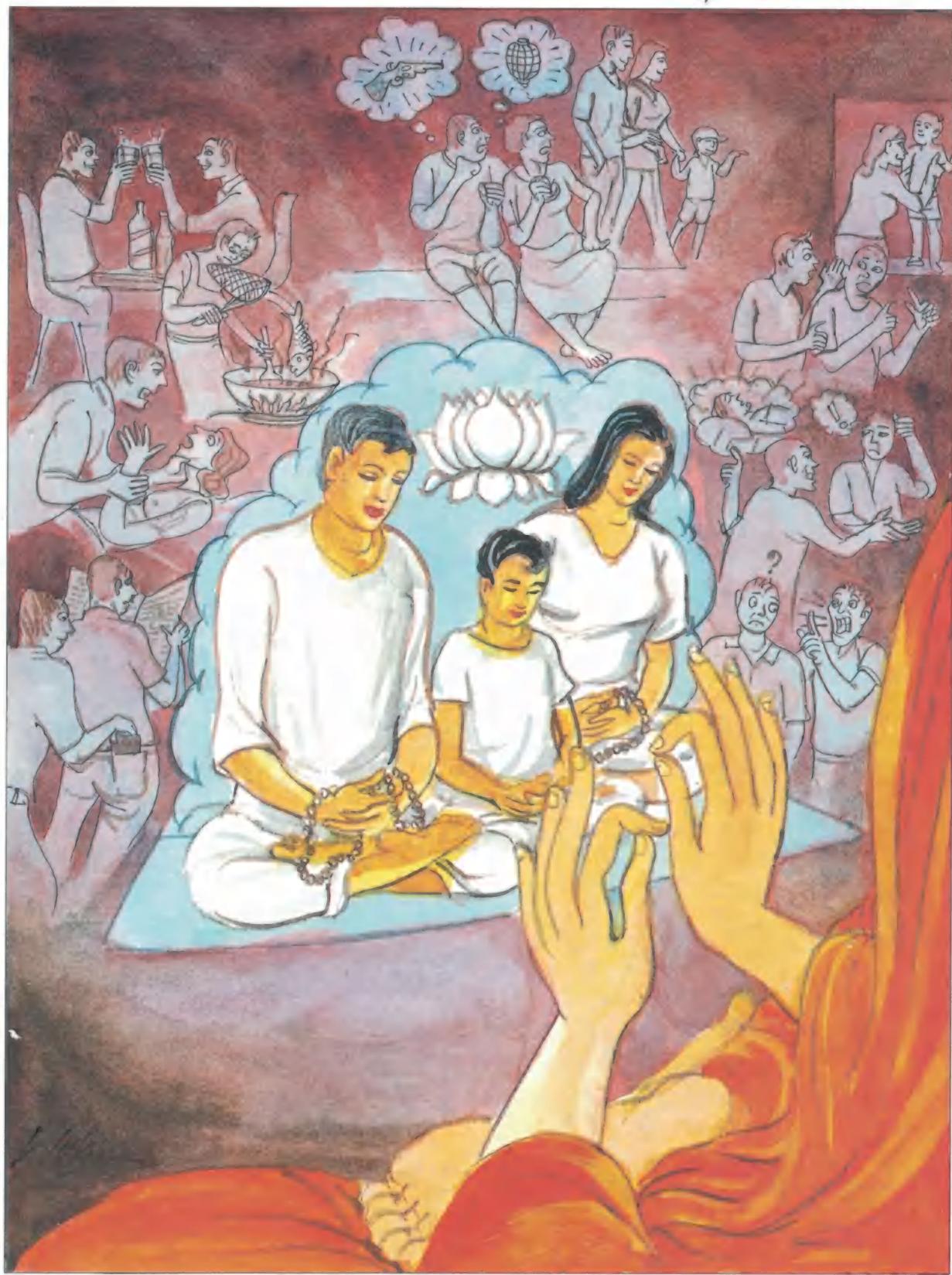
"The giver derives a high form of joy through his act of giving. He wins considerable respect from the wise people in the world. His reputation travels abroad. He will get the trust of people. All will consider him a trustworthy person."



Dhammacariyāca

Righteous Behaviour

Those who lead virtuous lives are protected by their righteous conduct.
They will not enter woeful states.



Righteous Behaviour

The expression "dhammacariyā" signifies "behaving in accordance with Dhamma". Dhamma is generally interpreted as righteousness.

Righteous behaviour is the pursuit of virtuous ways of life. An individual who pursues a righteous way of life always takes care not to do anything that is bad, sinful or unvirtuous.

In various systems of thought, the concept of "virtue" is interpreted in varying ways.

In some communities, it may be virtuous to kill animals or even men.

But, in the Buddhist system, virtue is interpreted more wholesomely.

The Buddhist sense of virtue does not allow any activity that is harmful to one's own self or to others.

Those who pursue a righteous way of life, have to follow certain guidelines. These guidelines help a person to lead a life of high virtue.

In the first instance, he must avoid taking life. He must not try to evaluate the quality of life in any way. He must refrain from taking life just because it is life and for no other reason.

The Buddha taught this virtue ahead of all humanist teachers of mankind.

To be virtuous one must not take what does not belong to one. One must take only what is given. In other words, one must not steal. Stealing even ideas is unvirtuous. A virtuous person will not indulge in bad sex conduct. This abstinence will lead to social integrity and strength.

To be virtuous, one must refrain from uttering falsehoods. This will improve human trust.

One must never do anything that will mar social

harmony. Bearing tales, bringing about dissension are all activities that contribute to disharmony. Virtuous people avoid such things. A virtuous person is always gentle. His words are accepted by all because he is full of compassion.

It is in the nature of a virtuous person to understand the need to get along with others in harmony. In a society where there are many virtuous persons, peace and tranquillity prevail.

A virtuous person does not get preoccupied with trivialities that do not matter to a wholesome way of life. People of righteous conduct do not pry into private affairs of people, because that kind of activity makes society a troubled place.

A virtuous person is not selfish. He always thinks of helping others. He will do good without expecting any selfish result.

A righteous person's life is full of loving-kindness. He does not hate people. He has patience. Even when others hate him, he remains calm and unperturbed.

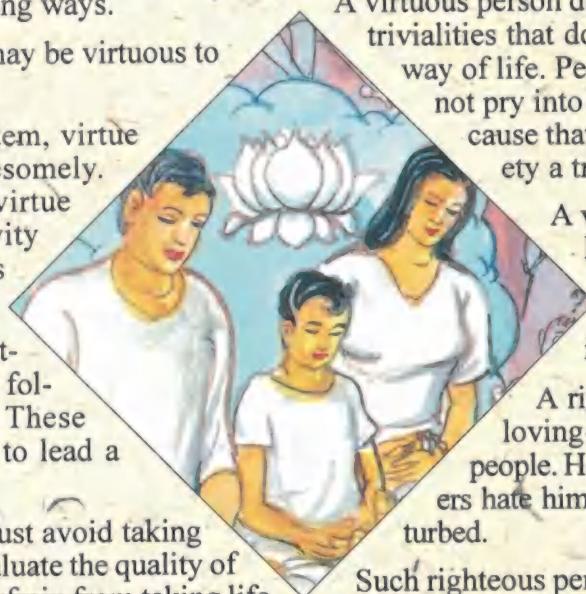
Such righteous persons are always preoccupied with achieving higher and higher spiritual goals.

A virtuous person sets an example to others about the best way of conducting one's life.

Therefore, he not only practises virtue, but also spreads it abroad.

Even the sight of righteous persons is a blessing. Here we can recall the instance of Emperor Asoka. His whole transformation into a Buddhist Emperor, came about because he was immensely pleased with the sight of the righteous Bhikkhu Nigrodha.

Therefore, Righteous conduct is indeed a high blessing.



Ñātakānañca Sangaho

Looking after Relatives

One's relatives, will help an individual when he is in distress. As relatives come to your help you must look after them, when they are in need.



Looking after Relatives

In all human communities, people are linked together with ties of relationship. Each family has its own group of relations.

These relations in turn have other relations.

This way, the whole of society is composed of a web of closely linked relations.

In a human group no one is alone. All the people are interdependent. Communities are built upon mutual assistance, co-operation and mutuality which are factors naturally present in life.

No human being is able to help all the people in the world. It is a physical impossibility for most men and women.

But all human beings can help members of their families. They can also assist their relations.

We are bound as human beings to help our relatives, wherever necessary. When the relatives are in need, it is our duty to look after them.

There is another practical reason for this. Your relatives will look after you whenever you are in need. If you do not help when you can, they, in turn, will neglect you when you are in need. This way, for a very practical reason, too, you have to look after your relatives.

There are some people who, though they can afford to help these relatives, tend to neglect their duty by them. This is inhuman.

Even those people who cannot help relatives materially, can extend help through kindness. Some people neglect even this kind of obligation. Helping one's relatives has a number of good results. When you help your relatives in need, you can expect them to help you in turn. When you acquire a reputation as a person who helps relations, you will be well accepted by society. This popular acceptance is helpful because it will make other people come to your assistance when you are in need.

There is also the spiritual factor. When an individual helps relatives, he derives considerable satisfaction from that human act. One can also think of the relief of the relative who receives such assistance. Therefore, helping relatives is naturally satisfying.

In the Buddhist tradition helping relatives is a spiritual virtue. The Buddha praised a monk who, though a bhikkhu, kept on helping his parents who were quite helpless.

Even animals help their relatives. There is the story of an elephant who kept on helping his mother elephant who was blind.

Relatives who are deprived or disabled, do not have any source of assistance. In such a situation it is especially necessary to help them.

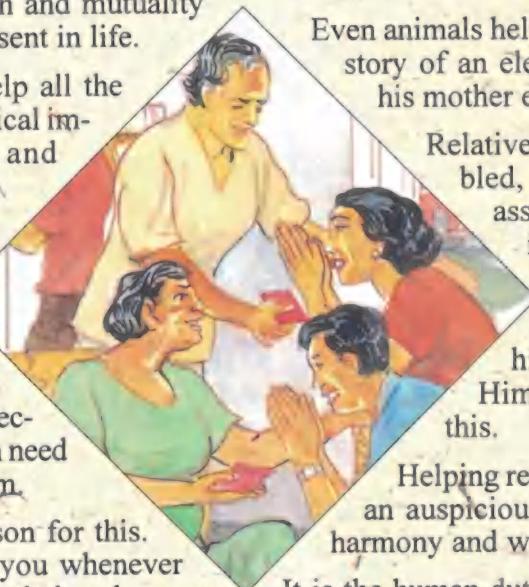
The Buddha himself helped his relatives. Therefore, He Himself has set an example in this.

Helping relatives is a great blessing and an auspicious activity, as it helps social harmony and well-being.

It is the human duty of people to care for relatives. The Buddha has stressed this virtue in the following stanza :

**Dhīroca bhoge adhigamma
Sanganhāti ca ñātake
Tena so kittim pappoti
Pecca saggeca modati**

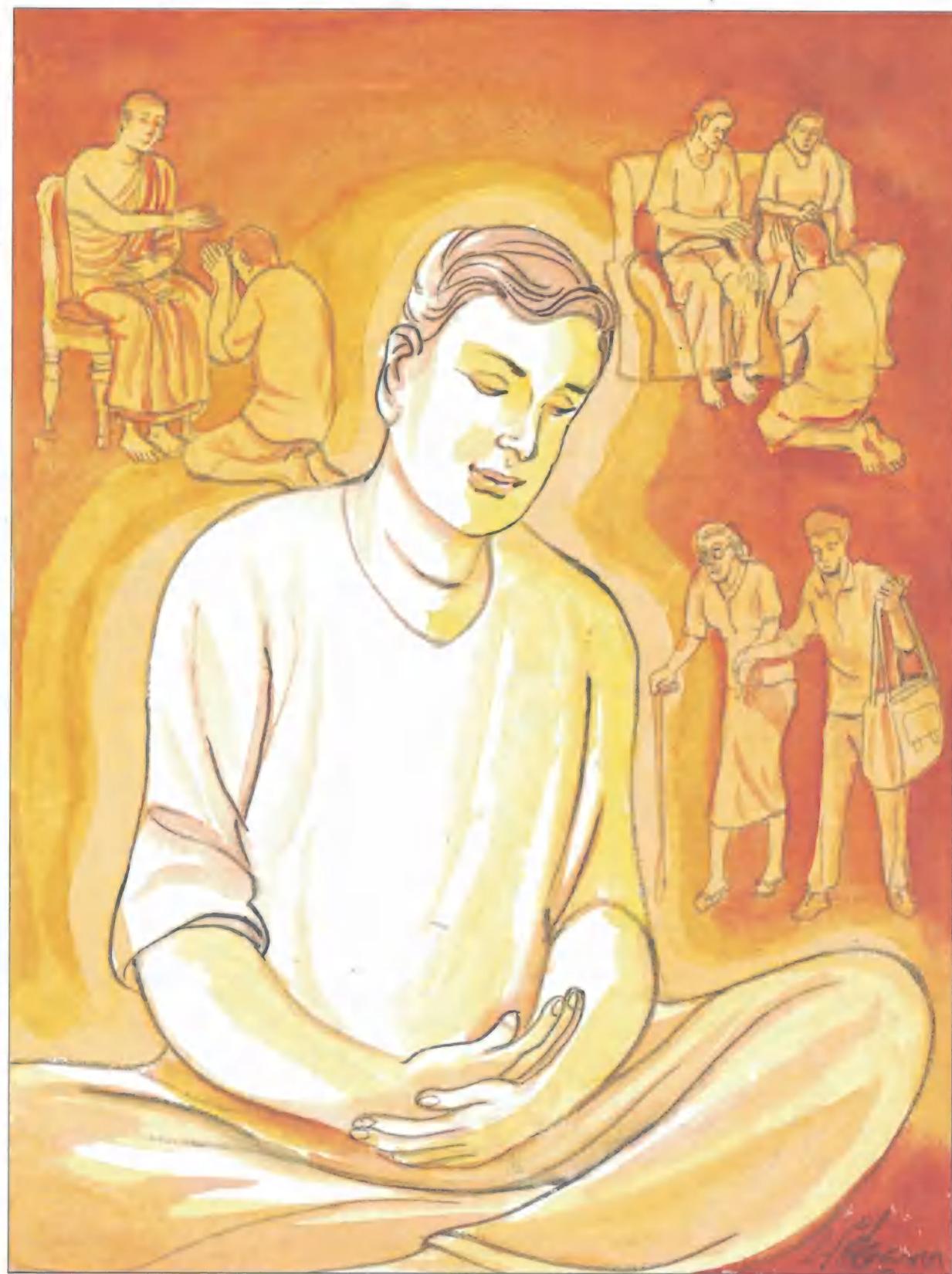
“Those wise people when they become affluent, look after their relatives. Through that virtuous act, they acquire a reputation everywhere as persons dedicated to the virtue of looking after their relatives. They receive praises as good men and, in the next birth, they will be happily reborn in a pleasant celestial abode”.



Anavajjāni Kammāni

Right Activity

One must not engage in activities that will harm either one's own self or others.
Contributing towards the betterment of life
is considered right activity.



Right Activity

The Pāli expression "Anavajjāni Kammāni" means action that is not wrong, action that is not forbidden action that is not blameworthy, action that is not to be shunned or avoided as bad. All this signifies action that is good in every way.

"Kammāni" implies any action, occupation or work. It could be livelihood, profession or job.

Why is this emphasis on the right kind of activity? Action defines the doer. A person who does some kind of activity gets shaped and moulded by it. It begins to affect your thinking, and, in consequence, your total pattern of life.

The kind of work you perform will determine not only your present circumstances, but even your future.

It is the right kind of activity that will ensure both worldly success and spiritual success. Those who indulge in bad action may at times seem as achieving success. But that kind of success through bad means, is illusory, temporary and destructive. Men and women who pursue evil ways, constantly suffer mentally- at times even physically, too.

One could take the example of a person who indulges in questionable activity. He could be a hunter. He is always filled with thoughts of killing and of destroying.

In the days of the Buddha there was a pork - butcher. He killed pigs as his livelihood. The pigs he killed were tortured in a variety of ways, before they were killed. These pigs who were chased by the butcher ran about squealing in fear and terror. When they were being tortured they squealed in pain. During his last days, this butcher, too, ran around like a hunted pig. Running around

on all his fours he squealed like a pig in pain. He died a horrible death.

His bad action changed the whole of his life, reducing him, at the end, into a human pig.

Those who do good things, on the other hand, grow into good human beings, and people get attracted to them. They live happily.

Right activity is beneficial. It helps not only the doer, but others as well. In short, right activity is doing good deeds.

To lead a blameless life, one must be morally upright; to be morally sound, one must have the capacity to know good and bad.

When an individual's activity is morally right, he feels a great sense of inner peace. He is calm, tranquil and subdued. He is not assailed by fears and trepidations. He can face the world unabashed.

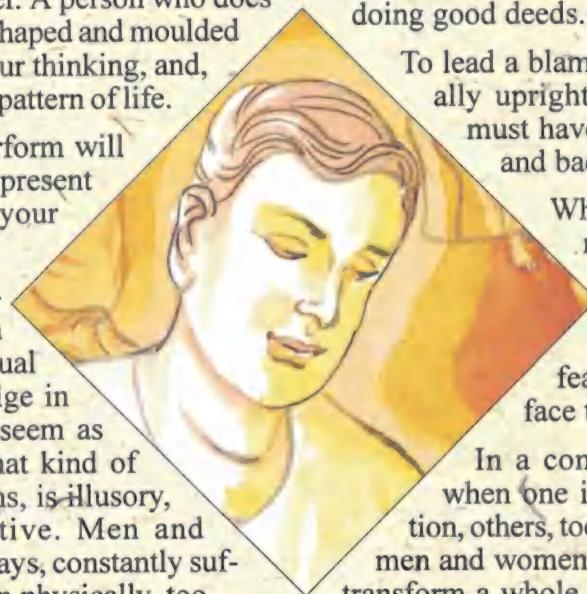
In a community or a social group, when one individual practises right action, others, too, feel his influence. This way, men and women who pursue right action can transform a whole society into a community of virtuous people.

There are many ways in which a person can pursue right activity. He can bring about peace and harmony to his home and his community.

He can improve his environment in his own way. He can promote education.

He can help people towards spiritual well-being. He can persuade others to do socially acceptable, communally beneficial activities.

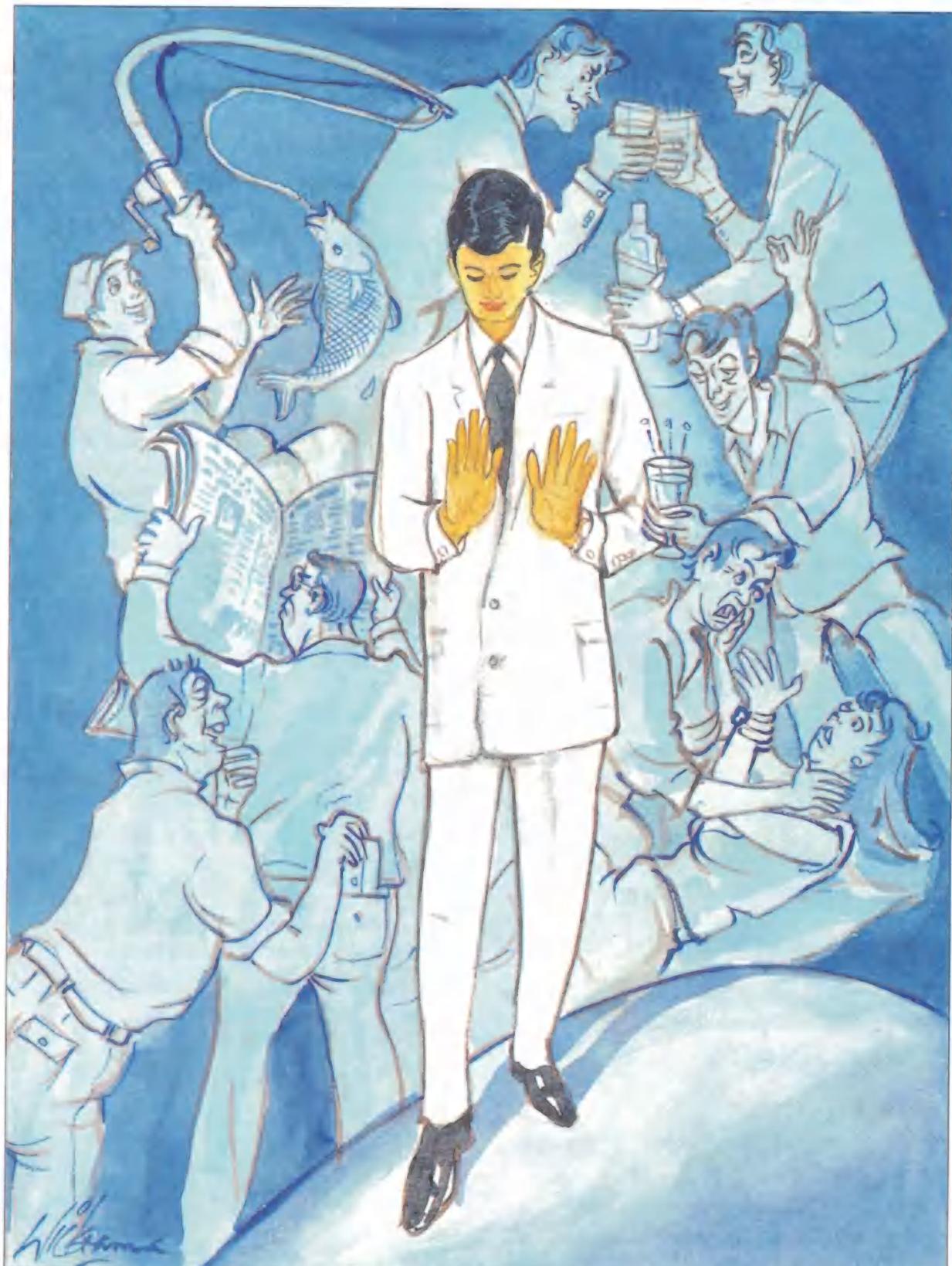
The Buddha describes, right activity as a high blessing because of all this.



Ārati Pāpā

Avoiding sin

One should have the capacity to understand what is right and wrong.
Discerning what is good and bad, sinful activities
should be avoided.



Avoiding Sin

Here "Ārati" means non-attachment: what is signified is non-attachment to sin.

Pāpā is an expression that describes sins-or unskilful actions.

Sinful actions always lead a person astray. This is because the person who stoops to a bad action is full of unwholesome thoughts. Day and night, those harmful thoughts assail his mind. He thinks of only sinful ways. Sinful activities always drag down his family harmony.

Sins are many. All those sins begin in the minds of men.

Therefore, what is essential is to make the people understand that both good and bad actions originate in the mind. If your mind is properly restrained, you can have a kind of control over your activities. With a disciplined mind it is possible to refrain from committing sinful acts.

The question is likely to arise why people should give up sinful acts. To some, committing sins is a source of pleasure. They derive a joy doing things that are described by the wise, as bad. But this seeming pleasure is a mere mirage. They experience the reality of these bad actions when they have to suffer for them.

Therefore, those who do not want any disaster to happen to them in the future, must scrupulously avoid sinful acts.

For the Buddhists, avoiding sin is a primary obligation. In the Stanza that very effectively sums up the essence of Buddhism, those who follow the path indicated by the Enlightened One, are asked to shun all sins. The stanza reads this way

sabba pāpāssa akaranaṁ

Kusalassa upasampadā

Sacitta pariyo dapanam

Etam Buddhāna sāsanam

(Shun all sins Acquire merit; have total control over your mind. This is the Teaching of the Buddha.)

In the Buddhist system, sins are clearly defined. All laymen are required to avoid the five sins. In a positive way, they are required to observe the five precepts of shunning five-fold sins.

In the modern world the young are very easily tempted to take to sinful ways. Parents, teachers and religious people must especially be concerned about this group.

Due to peer-pressure the young are introduced to such vices as taking intoxicating drinks and drug abuse.

Modern societies must devise ways to prevent young people from being tempted to commit sin.

For this social and communal action is needed. Above all, an effort should be made to bring about a clear awareness of the Buddha's Teachings to the young.

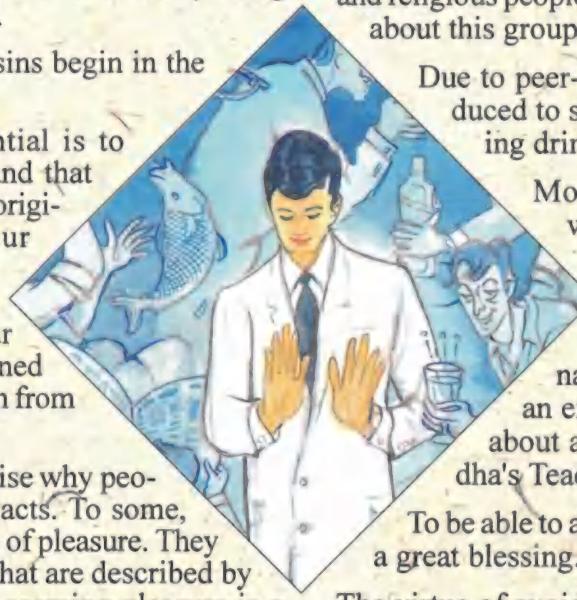
To be able to avoid sin is, without any doubt, a great blessing.

The virtue of avoiding sin is very effectively illustrated by the story of a villager who went into the forest in search of two heads of cattle that had strayed from his herd. There, a boa constrictor, got hold of him.

His first temptation was to cut off the boa with the knife in his hand, and free himself. But, as a devoted Buddhist he realised that taking of life is a grave sin. Resigning to his fate, he threw away the knife.

Strangely enough, as if it had sensed the man's compassion, the boa left him and slunk away into the forest.

Shunning sin brings about instant results.



Virati Pāpā

Abstaining from Sin

In order to achieve both worldly success and spiritual gain, one must abstain from sin. Sinful action brings about disaster.



Shunning Sins Totally

The Buddha has included two blessings related to the avoiding of sins. The first is "ārati (Pāpā)" and the second is "Virati pāpā". The Buddha has placed this high emphasis on the need to avoid and shun sins, because people are quite early led to commit sins. To shun sins totally, the discipline of the mind is of central importance.

What is a sin? A sinful act can be described as a form of behaviour that will clearly bring disaster to one's own self and to others.

Sins are of a variety of forms. A Buddhist layman must be capable of avoiding the five primary sins. These five are taking life, stealing, misconduct in sex, uttering falsehood and indulging in intoxicating drinks.

When we examine each of these we begin to see how they affect society and individuals adversely.

Take the first of the five sins enumerated above. The first sin is taking life. If people started killing much social harm will ensue.

People who harm will be done away with, for minor reasons. In most instances, the consequences of such killings are irreparable. Once you kill a person or an animal, you cannot revive them even if you wanted to do so badly.

Killing animals, too, brings about social disaster because in the natural chain of life, each animal has a place for itself.

Consider the second sin that of stealing. If people started robbing, social stability gets seriously disturbed. Security of communities will be badly affected if people start robbing and stealing, with no thought of others. Not giving people due wages and salaries is also a form of stealing.

The third sin is sexual misconduct. This leads to serious social disruption and sorrow.

The fourth sin is uttering falsehood. People lose confidence in social contracts, when people begin to lie. You cannot arrange harmonious activities when people utter falsehoods. In consequence, social and communal activities tend to decline.

The last of the five sins is taking intoxicating drinks. Today's society is very badly affected by this and drug-abuse. There is hardly any sin that an intoxicated person cannot stoop to.

To avoid sin totally, one must cultivate the discipline of the mind.

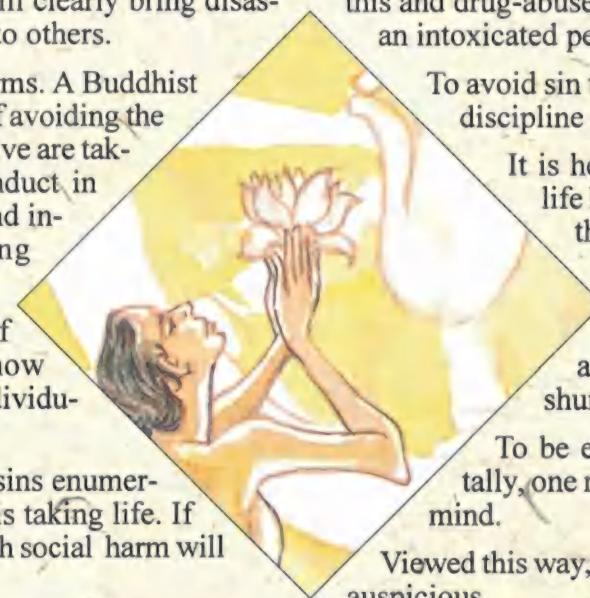
It is here that the Buddhist way of life helps. In the Buddhist system, the proper restraint of the mind is given high emphasis. When the Buddha indicated the total shunning of sin as a blessing, He advocated the shunning of even sinful thoughts.

To be effective in avoiding sins totally, one must not commit a sin even in mind.

Viewed this way, avoiding sin is indeed greatly auspicious.

Those who shun evil totally will never change their attitude, however high their skills. They refrain from doing evil, even when they are presented with the opportunity to commit sins. Once, **Cakkana**, a young man, who had shunned evil totally, was asked by his brother to fetch the flesh of a hare to cure their mother who was seriously ill. **Cakkana** found a hare caught in a snare set by someone. But, he let the hare free as he had shunned evil totally. He reflected upon his good deed and through the act of truth, was able to save his mother.

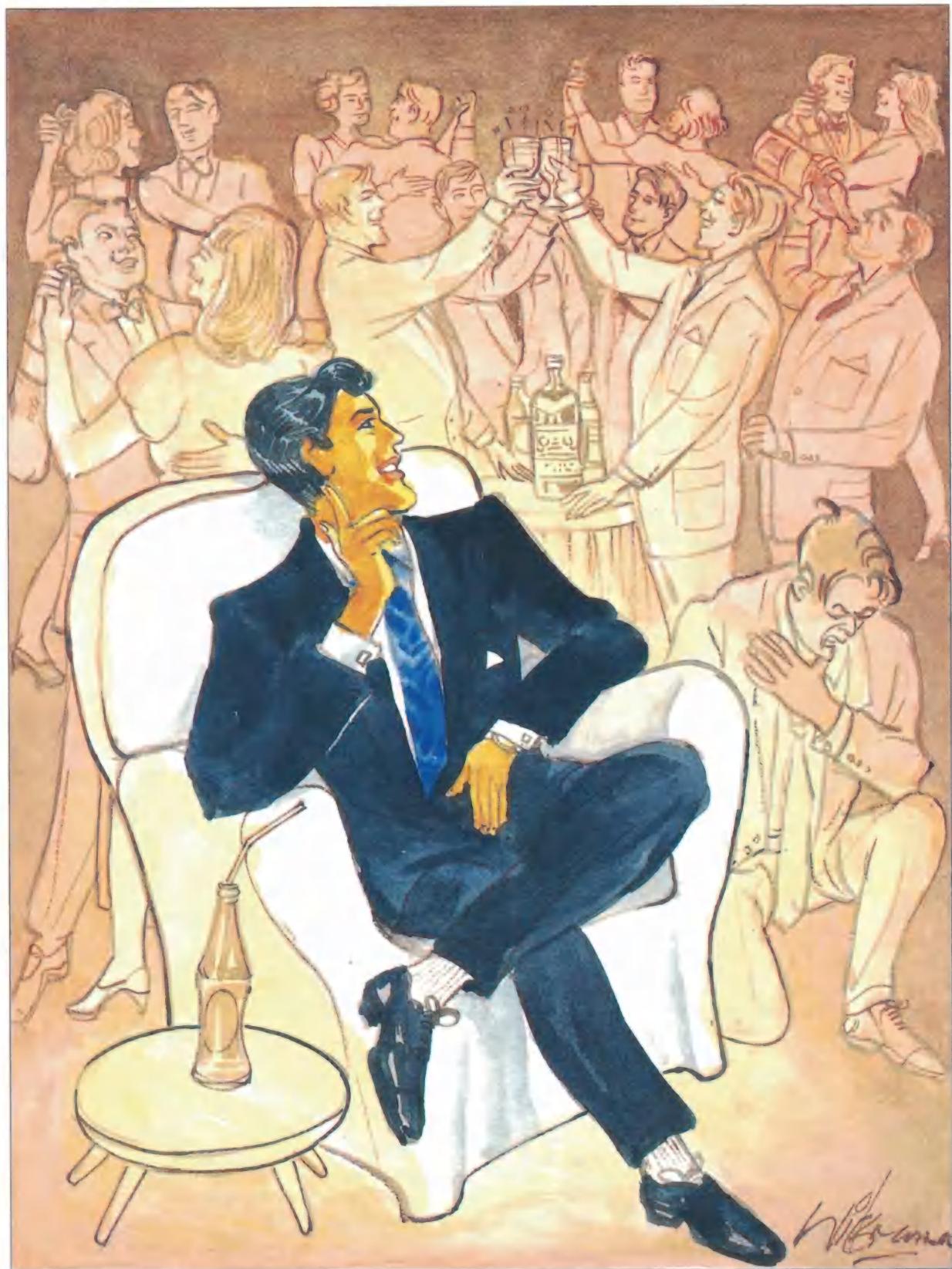
Such indeed is the power of shunning evil totally.



Majjapānā ca Saññamo

Refraining from taking intoxicants

Intoxicants reduce the quality of life of people and drag them down to the level of animals. A man whose mind is bewildered by intoxicants can stoop to any low activity.



Refraining from Intoxicating Drinks

In almost all modern societies, taking intoxicating drinks, has begun to spread like an epidemic.

A disturbing example is modern Russia. The collapse of the Soviet Republic, is largely due to the excessive drinking to which people in that country are attuned.

Work at factories and offices, got seriously disrupted due to the excessive drinking by workers. Former President Gorbachev, prohibited drinking during working hours.

This is a clear example of the far reaching effects of drinking. Whole countries and total communities can decay due to drinking.

The individual harm wrought by drinking is equally disastrous. Peace and calm have totally declined due to the drinking habit of some of their members. Some people drink away their fortunes.

People get into the habit of drinking from their early youth. Initially it is considered fashionable to drink. Even young people tend to think that it is modern to take intoxicating drinks.

To begin with, most individuals take to drink to 'belong'. But, soon they get addicted. They find it hard to shake off the habit of drinking.

Some people think drinking gives them a special vigour. This is scientifically false. A person under the influence of intoxicants, may shout and indulge in acts he will not ordinarily do.

This is not because he has got some new strength but, because the critical faculties of his mind have eroded. A man behaves properly in society under normal conditions, because his mind is under control. When an individual drinks, those controls disappear and he behaves very badly.

The drinking habit physically destroys brain cells. In consequence his capacity of mind begins to deteriorate.

The person who is given to drinking loses his sense of responsibility. Drunken driving is the foremost cause of many traffic accidents in the modern world.

Drug abuse, too, comes within the category of taking intoxicants. Many young lives get unduly destroyed by the drug habit.

Drugs have become a global menace. It is a global business to push drugs.

Even the most modern methods, tend to fail in the matter of fully rehabilitating those who are ruined by the drug habit.

The Buddhists have a religious obligation to prevent people from taking intoxicants. The young people should be trained to say 'no' to intoxicants even when they are pressed to try these.

Even in Buddhist countries drinking has become a major leisure activity.

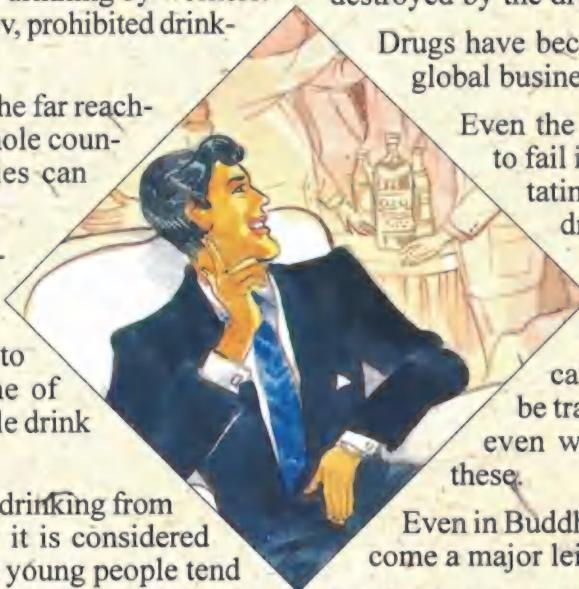
Parents have a duty to protect the children from those wicked people who tempt them to take intoxicants. Parents and teachers must organize themselves to fight this menace of intoxicants.

When a father drinks, the whole family gets broken up.

In broken families, the children are helpless. They, too, tend to take to crime.

The Buddha has emphasized the fact that avoiding intoxicants is a great blessing.

Drinks cloud the mind. Such a troubled mind cannot attain spiritual states. Even worldly achievements are not possible for those whose minds are clouded by intoxicants. Therefore, it is auspicious to avoid intoxicants.



Appamādo ca Dhammesu

Urge to do good and acquire merit

It is profitable to be alert to what is good. One with a well-established consciousness must be alert to acquiring merit



Urge to do Good and Acquire Merit

In several of His Discourses, the Buddha had advocated the need to be **appamāda** (diligent). It is profitable to examine why the Buddha communicated this sense of urgency. Human life is full of uncertainties. If one were to put off some action, he may, perhaps, not be able to do it at all.

Therefore, the Buddha advised that people must diligently, urgently devote themselves to the task of acquiring merit and attain spiritual progress. You cannot put it off for the next birth, because, no one is likely to have any control over what is likely to happen in the next birth.

Even the last words of the Buddha were "**Appamādena Sampādetha**" -go about your tasks diligently, urgently.

Here, in this "Blessing", the task assigned is behaving righteously (**dhammesu**).

Appamāda also implies mindfulness, being alert, making an effort. To be all that, wisdom is essential. Therefore, **appamāda** also signifies being alert and mindful with wisdom.

For a person who is keen to cultivate righteousness (virtue) this mindfulness is quite essential.

When a person is alert there are several things he should do. Firstly he must cultivate virtue. Secondly, he must be on the alert to see that external forces do not mar his virtues. He must, thirdly, continue to protect and preserve the virtues he has acquired.

When a person is alert to what he has achieved, he must guard against certain developments that are likely to shake his mindfulness. Some of these factors are: carelessness, inattentiveness, heedlessness, not being enthusiastic, lack of interest, unwillingness to repeat, lack of progress, lack of determination, and negligence.

When an individual has been able to acquire a treasure, it is his responsibility to protect it well against all threats. The alert person is like a sleepless individual keeping watch over his possessions. Why should one exercise urgency in cultivating the alertness of the mind?

The mind is difficult to be tamed. It tends to run away in any direction it wishes. It is like a wild animal. Its behaviour is unpredictable. It is always a strenuous task to establish mindfulness. If we need to cultivate Dhamma (righteousness) we must see to it that we have firmly established mindfulness.

Therefore, proper forms of meditation go hand in hand with "**appamādo**"- diligence. Being perpetually alert is the way to conquer death.

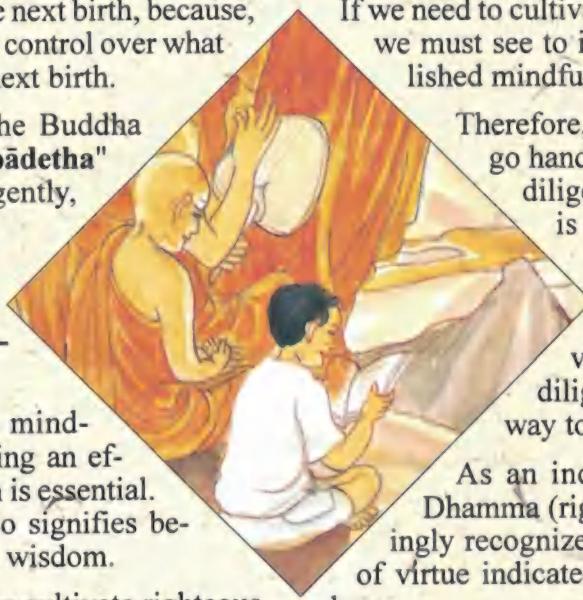
Through **appamāda** (diligence) you defeat the forces of death. This way an individual who has achieved total diligence (**appamāda**) is on his way to liberation.

As an individual has to be alert to Dhamma (righteousness), he must unerringly recognize what Dhamma is. The path of virtue indicated by the Buddha helps him here.

Considered this way, being **Appamāda** (diligent) in the pursuit of Dhamma (virtue) is a great Blessing.

According to the Supremely Enlightened One, the only force that can ensure one's well-being both here and thereafter, is diligence in the acquisition of virtue.

In practical terms, any human being has only a brief span here on earth during this birth. If he is diligent here in acquiring merit he can ensure a better existence in the vastness of the realm of existence.



Gāravo

It is a noble human quality to bestow honour on those who are worthy of honour. We must honour those senior in age to us also those who are our spiritual seniors.



Reverence

Gāravo implies bestowing honour upon those who deserve to be honoured. All human beings must acquire the habit of honouring people who deserve such recognition.

This good quality should start at home. Children must be trained to honour their parents. Whenever the children leave home or when the parents are leaving home, the children should worship them. In some Buddhist homes in Sri Lanka, the children worship their parents and elders as a daily routine. There are Pāli stanzas that the children recite when they honour their parents, by worshipping them.

In any culture, religious leaders and religious persons are honoured. Priests receive honour as our spiritual guides. In religious rituals, not only persons, but sacred places and objects, too, are venerated.

The Buddhists are especially trained to venerate the Triple Gems the **Buddha, Dhamma** (Buddha's Teaching) and the **Sangha** (the Brotherhood of monks).

Special veneration is offered to saints (Arahants) and outstanding personalities.

Even lay persons of outstanding virtues are venerated.

Offering veneration to persons who deserve such honour is good for one's own personality.

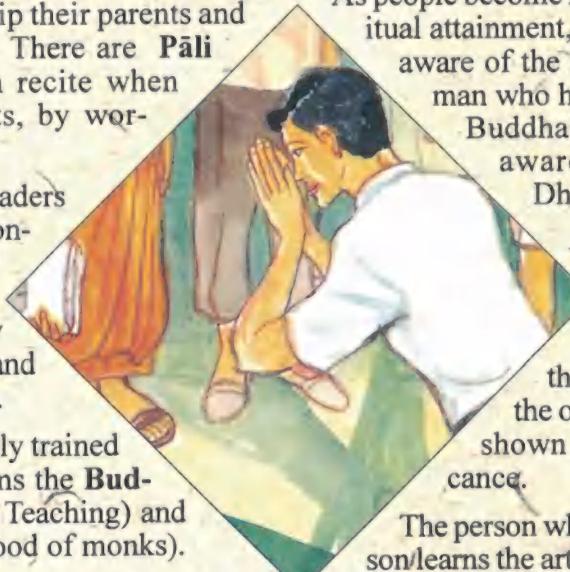
When we single out an individual to be honoured, we recognize his virtues. In that act of recognition, we ourselves yearn to acquire that identical virtue. The act of veneration has an element of gratitude too in it. The Buddha venerated the Tree under which He attained Supreme Enlightenment. This is a form of gratitude.

In various cultures, the feeling of veneration is expressed in a variety of ways. In most Asian cul-

tures, the symbol of veneration is putting one's palms together. At times, people go down on all fours in the presence of those who are being venerated. In some instances, people lie down prostrate in front of the person or the object venerated.

In the Buddhist system, there are special stanzas that have to be recited while worshipping those persons or objects of veneration.

As people become mature in wisdom and in spiritual attainment, they become more and more aware of the need to venerate. It is only a man who has studied the doctrine of the Buddha deeply, who will really be aware of the need to venerate Dhamma.

At first one may venerate an individual or an object merely as a ritual. But as he or she begins to discover the greatness of the person or the object venerated, the reverence shown will have a deeper significance.

The person who bestows honour upon a person learns the art of being selfless. This, in turn makes his mind mature.

In a stanza extolling the virtues of worshipping those who deserve to be venerated, four results from such veneration are enumerated.

*"Abhivādana sīlissa,
Niccam vajjhā pacāyino,
Cattāro Dhammā vaddhanti
Ayu, vanno sukham, balam,*

Those who continue to venerate the elders and persons of great virtue derive four benefits from such actions. The four benefits are: long life; pleasant complexion; good health and strength. This is why the Buddha has indicated veneration as a great Blessing.

Nivāto

Humility

Undue Pride robs the opportunities people have to achieve progress in worldly and spiritual matters. Humility enables people to understand the value of others and to profit from their greatness.



L. M. Bhana

Humility

Humility implies a lack of haughtiness. Pride and haughtiness are associated with people who are either stupid or downright foolish. Even the greatest human being has no reason to be proud. This is because even he or she is subject to decay and death. All human beings share the same fate. If that were, so what is the reason to be irrationally proud?

Those who are proud cannot acquire profitable material wealth or great spiritual riches. In learning, humility is of the essence. You must possess the humility to be aware that you do not know certain things. It is that awareness which makes you learn. If, on the other hand, you went about thinking that you know, you will not be able to learn the things that matter.

There is a folk-story about the crow that wanted to know the art of building a nest. The crows do not have nests. This crow went to a bird who was an adept in nest-making. The expert bird told the crow, "You first take a twig". The crow said "yes, I know that". Then the expert bird said, "you place the twig this way". The crow replied, "I know that too". Without losing patience, the expert bird went on: "You take another twig". The crow said "I know that, as well." The expert bird lost his patience and went away. To date, the crow cannot build a nest.

The crow in this folk-tale did not have the humility necessary to learn things.

In Buddhist literature, humility is compared to a "cloth on which you wipe your feet," or to "a bull, with horns cut off", or else to "a snake with

fangs taken off". This shows that humility is a state of mind devoid of unnecessary aggressiveness and pride.

A person of real humility does not parade his "self": such a person is restrained.

Humility is necessary even for worldly success. In a storm huge trees fall down. But the lowly reed-bushes survive. This is because the big trees do not bend but the reed-bushes bend before winds. This way, humility proves a means of success.

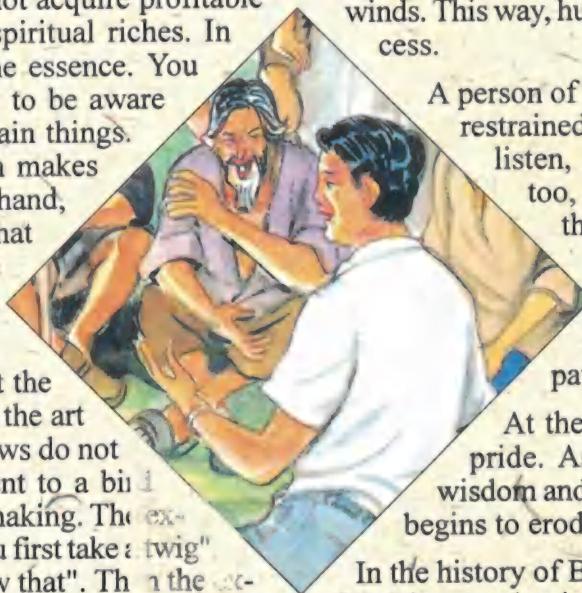
A person of humility is a disciplined and restrained person. He can, therefore, listen, pay attention and learn. He too, succeeds as the reed-bushes that bend before the wind.

Humility has been classified by the Buddha as a great blessing because it paves the way to liberation.

At the opposite end of humility is pride. As an individual develops in wisdom and spiritual advancement, pride begins to erode.

In the history of Buddhism Arahant Sāriputta has given a classic instance of humility. Once, when this Ven. Arahant, one of the two Chief Disciples of the Buddha, the Supremely Enlightened One, was walking along, part of the hem of his robe was touching the ground. A seven-year-old novice Bhikkhu, seeing this, drew the Arahant's attention to this. With tremendous humility, the Ven. Arahant adjusted his robe and saluted the child-monk for correcting him.

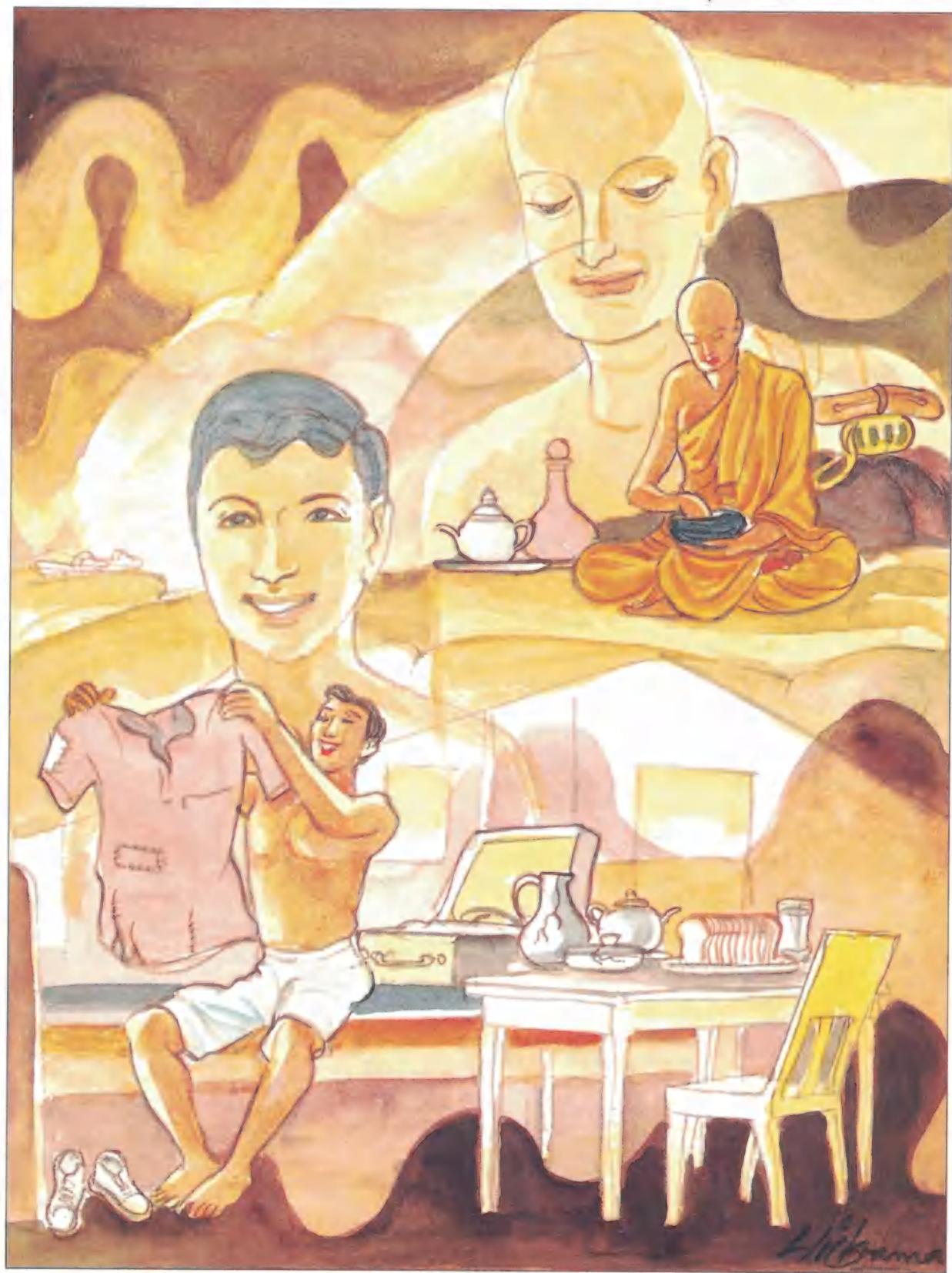
This is how humility increases with greater and greater progress in spirituality.



Santuṭṭhi

Contentment

Being happy with what you possess leads to happiness. If one yearns to get more and more, one's life will be overwhelmed by frustrations.



Contentment

In the modern world, it is not at all easy for many people to experience contentment. This is partly due to the fact that, in today's world people have endless desires.

Desire was present in human society throughout the ages. But, today avenues through which desires are generated have proliferated. All media - both print and electronic are full of advertising, that kindles desire. Wherever you look there are aids to increased desire. But no human being can have all these desires fulfilled. In consequence most people in the modern world feel frustrated. When frustration occurs it invariably leads to unhappiness - to discontentment. A discontented person cannot lead a successful life either at worldly level or at spiritual level.

That is the reason why the Buddha has asked the Bhikkhus, to lead a life without many possessions. They are asked to have only the bare essentials. This way desire is eliminated. When the mind is not troubled by desires that cannot be fulfilled, it is easy to concentrate on the spiritual.

The Bhikku is disciplined into living with whatever he gets, without yearning for more. In the matter of food, he is content with what is received as alms. He has only a limited number of robes. This way he is quite content in mind.

Even lay people can derive contentment and happiness by limiting one's desires. When one is happy with what he has, when an individual is

content, his mind is free. Peace and tranquillity reign in a free mind.

But if he is grasping and is looking for more and more with a craving that is limitless, his mind becomes cluttered and unwholesome. He cannot know peace. There are people, whose desire for more, never ceases, even when they have all the things they need. They can never say 'enough.'

With more and more possessions, one experiences greater and greater anxiety. This does not allow happiness.

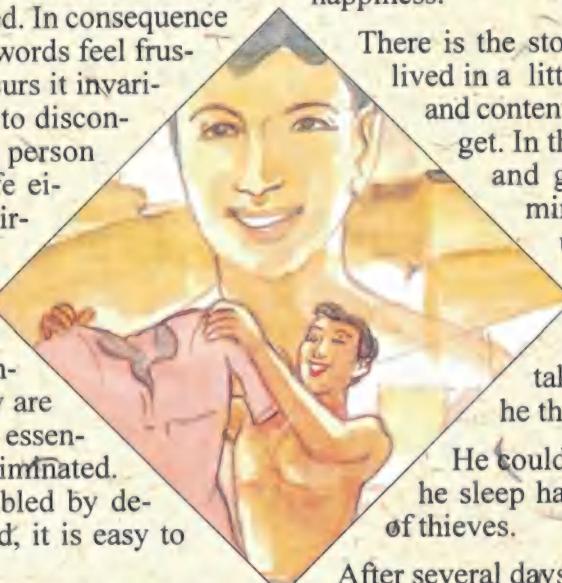
There is the story of a poor musician, who lived in a little hovel. He was very happy and contented. He ate whatever he could get. In the night he will play his flute and go to sleep with a tranquil mind. This man received a pearl unexpectedly. He would look for places where he could hide it. He would hide it in one place and next be would take it to another place which he thought was safer.

He could not play his flute: nor could he sleep happily because he was afraid of thieves.

After several days of this, he decided to get rid of the pearl. He went to the sea-shore, closed his eyes and threw it out into the sea. He came back home and continued to live with his usual contentment.

Contentment comes from the lack of desires. When an individual realizes this he can live happily.

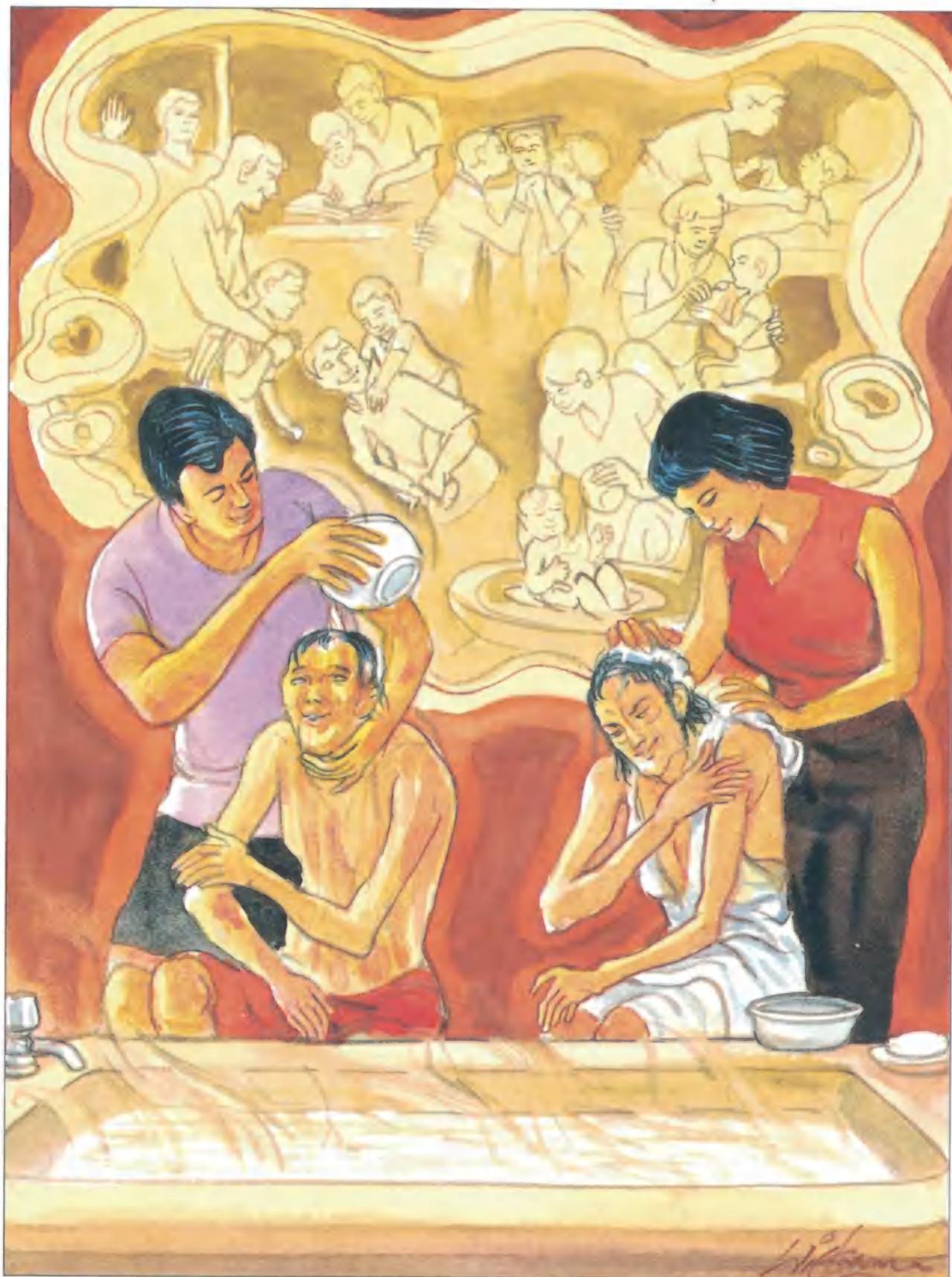
That is why the Buddha said, that, contentment is a great blessing.



Kataññutā

Gratitude

Remembering some good things done to one, if one were to do good in return, that quality is described as gratitude. The Buddha gazed in gratitude at the Bodhi Tree that sheltered him when he was striving to achieve Enlightenment.



Gratitude

Gratitude is classified among the Great Blessings, because it helps to preserve the harmony of society. The Pāli word "Kataññu" implies remembering the good done unto one by another.

"Whenever one gets the opportunity one must in turn help those who helped them."

In today's world, the sense of gratitude is fast disappearing. This is because people are becoming more and more self-centred. The Buddha was able to foresee this. He said, "In this world two kinds of people are difficult to be found. They are, those who do something kind to another person and those who will remember the kindness they received."

But, the Buddha Himself taught how one could be grateful. The well-known incident of the Buddha gazing at the Bodhi Tree is an instance of supreme gratitude. The tree sheltered Him when he was seated under it, striving to achieve enlightenment. It was under that tree that He attained supreme enlightenment.

He was grateful for this help. We have to show our gratitude to our parents and teachers, our relatives and religious persons. No society can function effectively without interdependence without co-operation and help. To preserve this social harmony it is essential to be grateful to those who help us.

In ancient times, when people took shelter under a tree, they would clear the place before they left that place. They do not even break a leaf of this tree that gave them shelter.

There are some people who do not show their gratitude to their parents. Had it not been for our parents we would not have experienced life at all. People do good without expecting anything in return. But, it is the human duty of those who receive help, to be grateful. In some societies there are annual get-togethers to enable people to show their gratitude to those who helped them in various ways.

The gratitude of children towards their parents is a natural sentiment. Some people in today's world are devoid of even that kind of natural sense of gratitude.

Gratitude does not imply giving something in return. Even a word of thanks is sufficient gratitude.

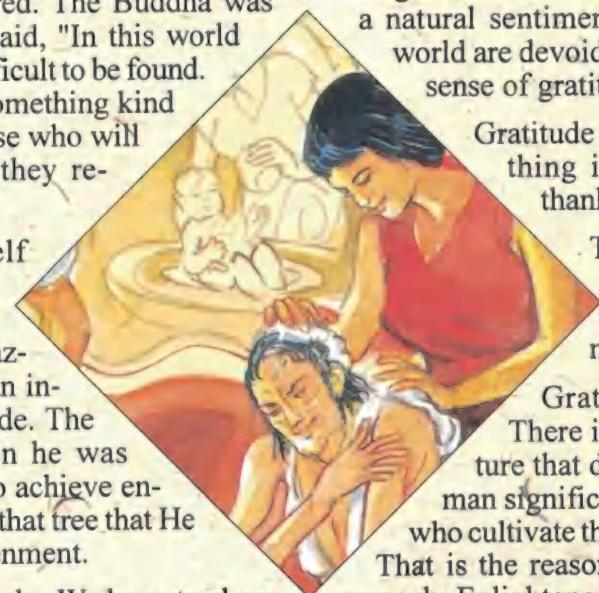
The Buddha classified gratitude as a Great Blessing, because it is a great human duty.

Gratitude is a saintly quality. There is hardly any religion or culture that does not uphold the high human significance of gratitude. But, those who cultivate this habit tend to be rather rare.

That is the reason why the Buddha, the Supreme Enlightened One, stated that these persons who are sensitive to the need to be grateful, are a rarity in the world.

It is said that the good turn done to an individual who does not recognize his duty to be grateful is like throwing a seed in the fire. Such a seed in the fire is quite certain to burn and become incapable of growing. A good turn done to a wicked person does not achieve fruition.

This way, gratitude is a factor present only in a high quality mind.



Kālena Dhamma Savanam

Listening to Religious Discourses

In order to conduct themselves properly in life, people must listen to right advice when guidance is needed.



KĀLENA DHAMMA SAVANAM

Timely listening to Religious Discourses

It is a great Blessing to be able to listen to religious Discourses. There is hardly any special time to listen to the Discourses. But, the statement above says 'Kālena Dhamma Savanam' What does this imply. This implies that one should listen to the dhamma when one is quite ready. If one listens to the Dhamma at an opportune time, the benefit is greater. One really needs it at that time.

At times people are not ready to listen to the Dhamma. The story of the hungry and tired Brahman, is a case in point. He spent the morning looking for an ox that had strayed away from his herd. He came back from that search fatigued and quite hungry. He heard that the Buddha was in the vicinity. He visited the place where the Buddha was. The Buddha could clearly see that the Brahmin was ripe to attain spiritual heights. But the Buddha did not want to preach the Dhamma to him as he was aware that the Brahmin was not ready to listen. Therefore the Buddha directed that he should be fed first. It was only after that the Buddha got him to listen to the sermon. This way, the teaching of the Buddha should be listened to when the occasion is quite right for listening.

Some people are not ready to listen to the Dhamma for physical reasons. If the body is ailing, mind will not be attentive. In the same way if the mind is disturbed, it will not be possible to listen attentively. It is possible for people to listen attentively on some special day. Full-moon days or Buddhist Festivals are instances.

Some people can listen to the Dhamma keenly

when they urgently need spiritual solace. When people suffer a grave illness they are keen to listen to the Dhamma.

Some old people are keener to listen than younger people. When there is heightened awareness of the Dhamma, some people are ready to listen.

In the statement 'Kālena Dhamma Savanam' (Listening to the Dhamma at opportune moments), the emphasis is on 'listening.' This is because in the days of the Buddha, learning was largely through listening. Even in our day, though books are plentiful, some people still prefer to listen.

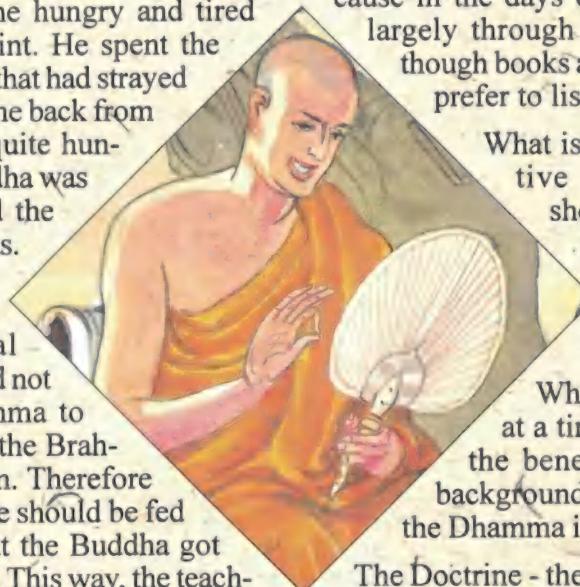
What is specially essential for effective listening is that the mind should be receptive. For effective listing to the Dhamma, the listener's mind should be free from the influence of drugs and intoxicants.

When one listens to the Dhamma at a time the listener is quite ready, the benefits are greater. Given this background one can see that listening to the Dhamma in due time is a great blessing.

The Doctrine - the Teachings of the Buddha - is profitable to listen to, at any time. But, there are special times and particular occasions when it becomes quite essential to learn the Dhamma.

Men and women of this world get afflicted by a variety of blemishes. When these things begin to trouble the mind, that is exactly the time one should listen to the Dhamma, to achieve relief.

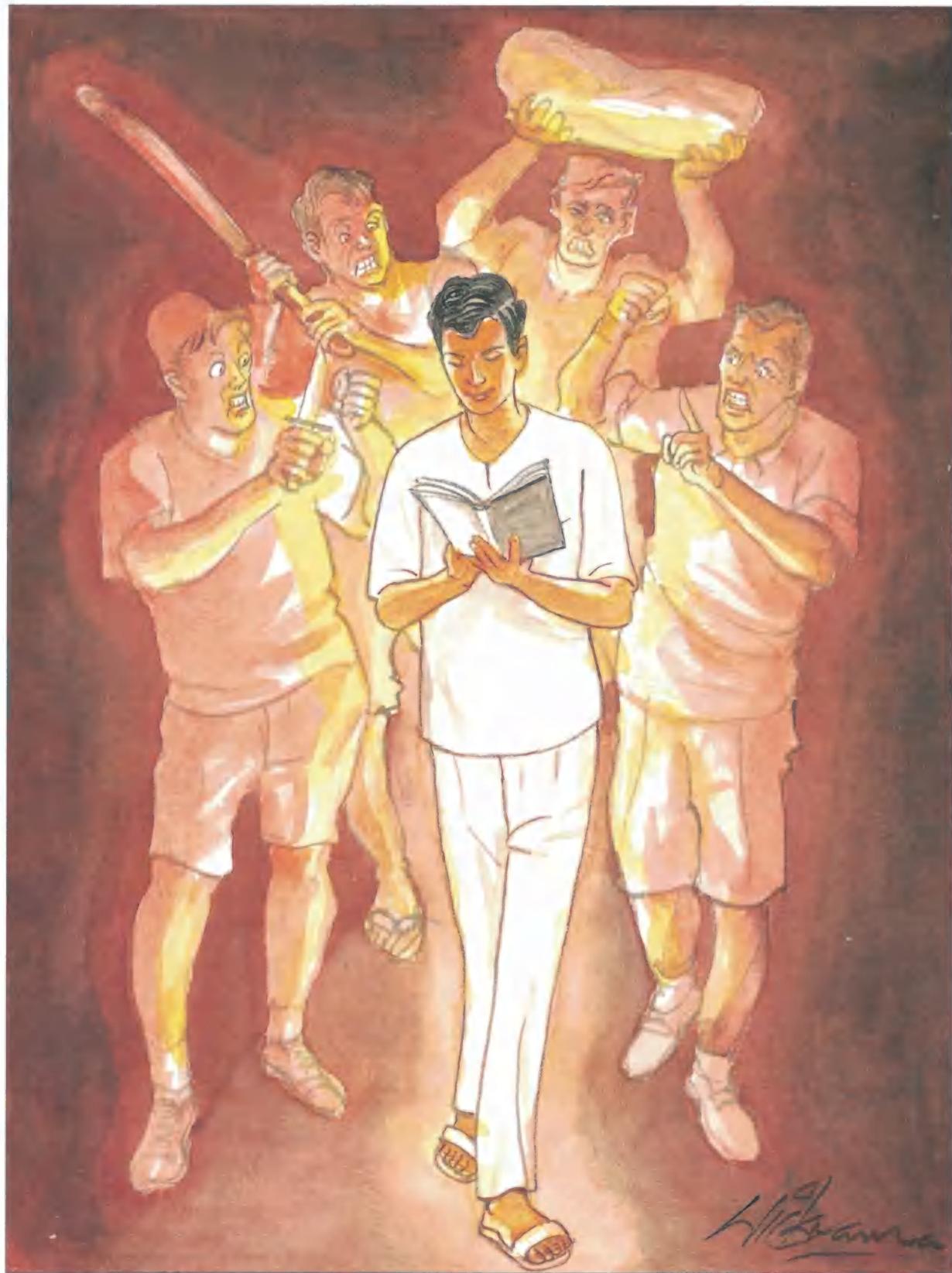
Listening to the Dhamma at a time when such listening is imperative is, indeed, a blessing.



Khanti

Patience

People lose their patience, when they get frustrated. Losing patience, leads to quarrels and conflicts. Impatience is destructive and its social implications are disastrous.



Patience

In the modern world, most people tend to lose their temper at the least provocation. They are touchy. They are not at all prepared to forgive, forget or forbear. They lack tolerance.

Therefore, patience is a Blessing that is exceptionally essential for the moderns.

In the contemporary world not only individuals, but even states tend to be impatient with one another. Anger has always been around in human society. But, today it has become something of a global epidemic.

Those who travel by bus or by train become impatient with fellow passengers and with officers. This kind of impatience is very extensively prevalent in crowded Asian cities.

When people lose patience, violence gets invariably unleashed. At personal level loss of patience results in uninhibited verbal exchanges, exchange of blows and even in killings. Ordinary people lack patience to consider issues calmly and quietly. As a result they jump to conclusions illogically and start quarrelling.

The minds of ordinary people are like rough, turbulent seas. They are disturbed and full of conflicts. In such minds, there is hardly any room for patience.

But the minds of advanced, cultured individuals are like, deep, tranquil, clear pools. They do not even have a ripple to disturb them. In such minds patience reigns supreme. They can remain calm and collected whatever may be the challenge.

Men whose minds are disciplined by meditation and high mental culture do not tend to get worried or flustered. They continue to possess an even tenor, under all provocations. Patience is the result of the discipline derived from the correct pursuit of Dhamma.

Patience is needed for an individual to become a Supremely Enlightened person. In consequence,

patience is one of the ten *pāramitās* (perfections) that have to be fulfilled by Aspirant Buddhas.

An Aspirant Buddha, practises patience in an extremely amazing manner. In Buddhist literature there is the story of the Hermit who professed patience. His limbs were severed but he never ceased to be patient. Even though he died under torture he never gave up his patience. This patient hermit was killed in cold blood by a wicked king who was keen to find out where the hermit's patience rested.

Ordinary people cannot even think of such patience. They become impatient at the least thing. To prevent impatience one must discipline one's self to acquire the habit of tolerance. However sharp some one's words are people must never get moved.

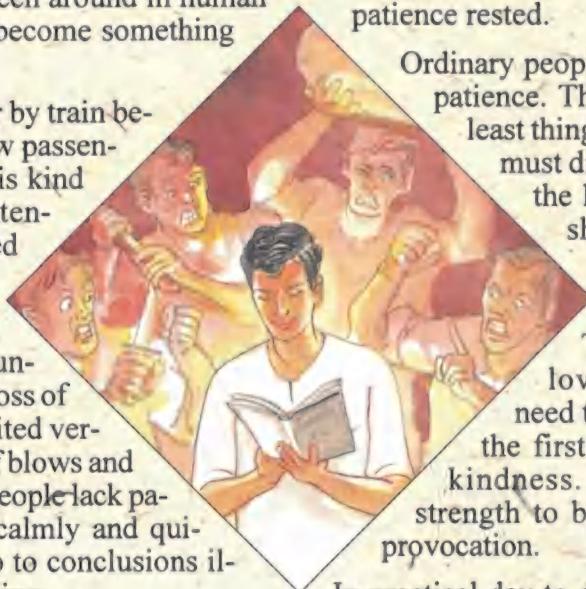
The anti-dote to impatience is loving-kindness. Those who need to cultivate patience, must in the first instance cultivate loving-kindness. This will give them the strength to be patient with any form of provocation.

In practical day to day terms, patience is one of the most essential ingredients for worldly and spiritual success. That is why the Buddha classified patience (**Khanti**) as a Great Blessing.

Patience is primarily a state of mind. Therefore, it is quite likely to heal the mind. Patience is a form of light held to illumine the recesses of the mind darkened by fumes of anger.

Patience, while healing the mind, brings about physical well-being as well. When the mind becomes tranquil with patience, the calmness of the mind, in turn, helps the body too, to achieve better health. Therefore, patience certainly helps both body and mind to remain in perfect trim.

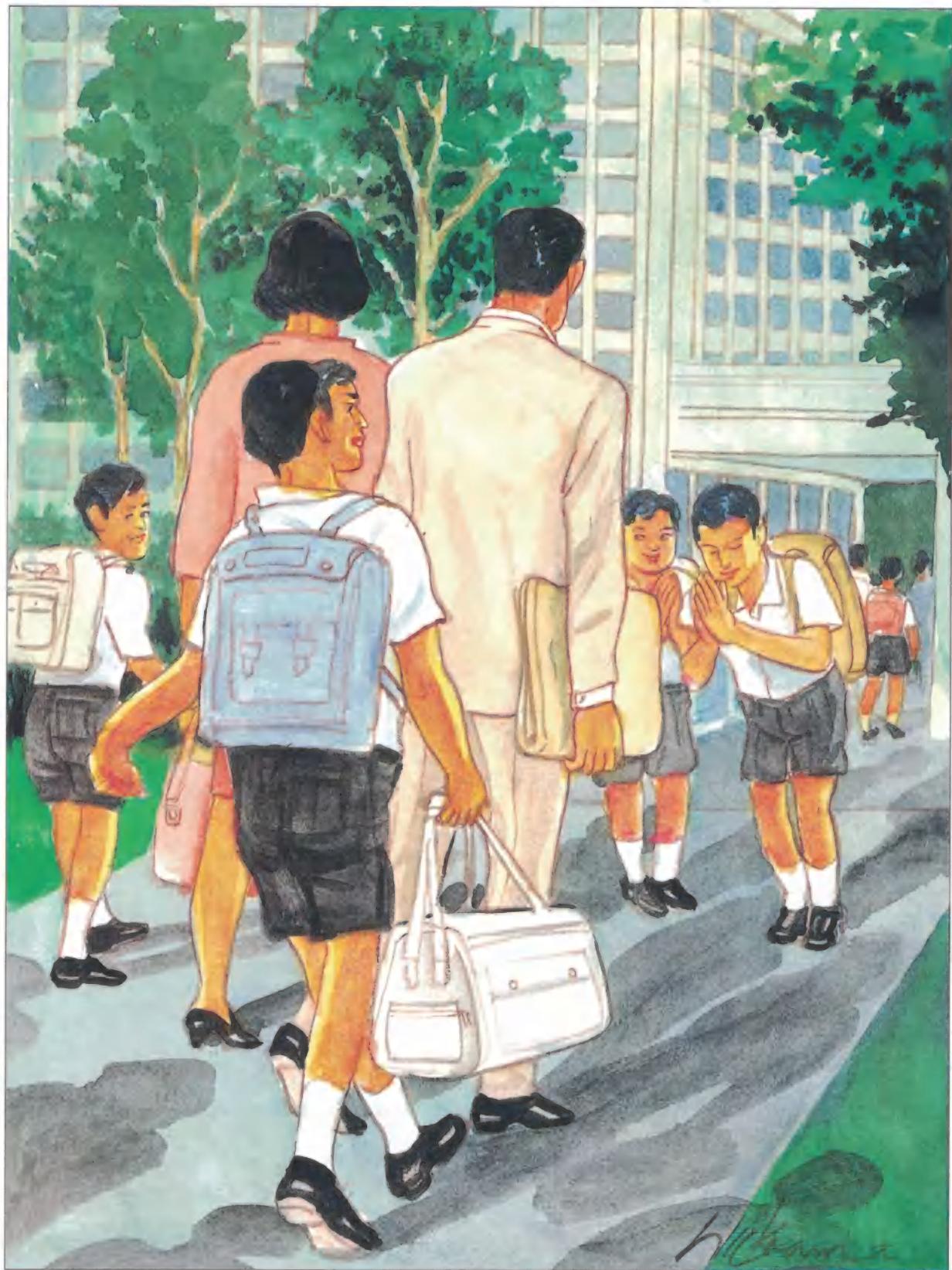
An individual who cultivates the habit of patience is admired by many. He will have true friends. He will not be given to irregular behaviour. This way, patience is a positive force.



Sovacassatā

Capacity to Accept Advice

People can improve themselves only if they can tolerate advice that is well - intentioned. The willingness to listen to good advice is a great Blessing.



Capacity to Accept Advice

A wholesome quality- associated with youth is obedience- the capacity to listen to constructive advice and follow beneficial instructions. An individual who is prepared to listen to proper advice, is an individual who can be corrected. If an individual can be corrected he can improve himself and further his development - both, spiritual and worldly.

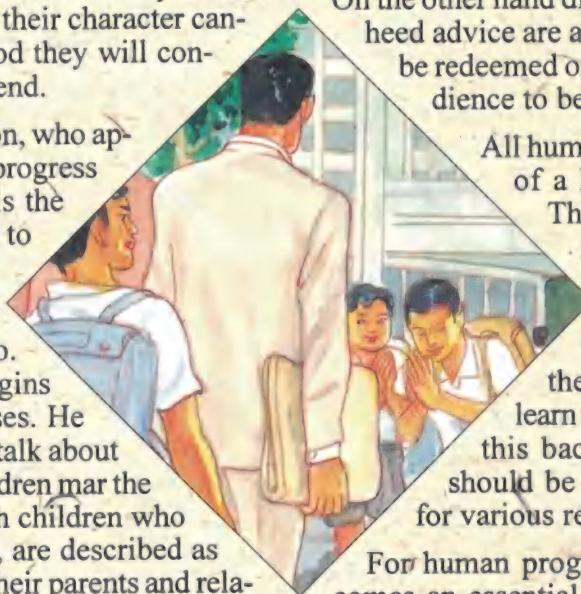
We can consider the contrast. Those who do not hearken to advice are stubborn. They remain harshly disobedient. Since their character cannot be changed for the good they will continue in their downward trend.

It is only the obedient person, who appreciates advice, who will progress in the Dhamma path. He is the kind of person who is easy to speak to.

But the disobedient person is difficult to speak to. The disobedient person begins to lie, to cover up his lapses. He cannot listen patiently and talk about his errors. Disobedient children mar the harmony of families . Such children who are a slur to their families, are described as "Black Sheep" they make their parents and relatives anxious.

Such stubborn, wayward people cannot contribute much towards social progress. Since they cannot be relied upon, they are not given positions of responsibility.

Those who are stubborn, will at times find fault with those who advise them. This way they are difficult to get along with. They cannot fit into a team harmoniously because they will go their own way, while others go in another direction.



Gentle meek people who are prepared to listen to advice and obey orders are held in high esteem everywhere. They are said to be like well-bred horses. They need only a gentle touch and the mere whisper of a kind word. But, untamed, obstinate beasts can never be controlled that way. They will even harm their masters.

Seen in this perspective, obedience, capacity to listen to good advice are all a great blessing.

On the other hand disobedient people who do not heed advice are a menace to society. They can be redeemed only if they too recognize obedience to be a great blessing.

All human beings, with the exception of a Buddha, are prone to error.

There is hardly anyone who does not forget things occasionally.

In such a world, there are millions of things people would not know. Therefore, they have to listen to others to learn what they do not know. Given this background, all human beings should be prepared to listen to others, for various reasons.

For human progress, listening to people becomes an essential ingredient. If well-meaning advice is given to a person, he or she should heed that advice. To accept advice and to consider the advice given, one must have an evolved mind. Those who resent advice offered with the best of intentions are either stubborn or are very foolish.

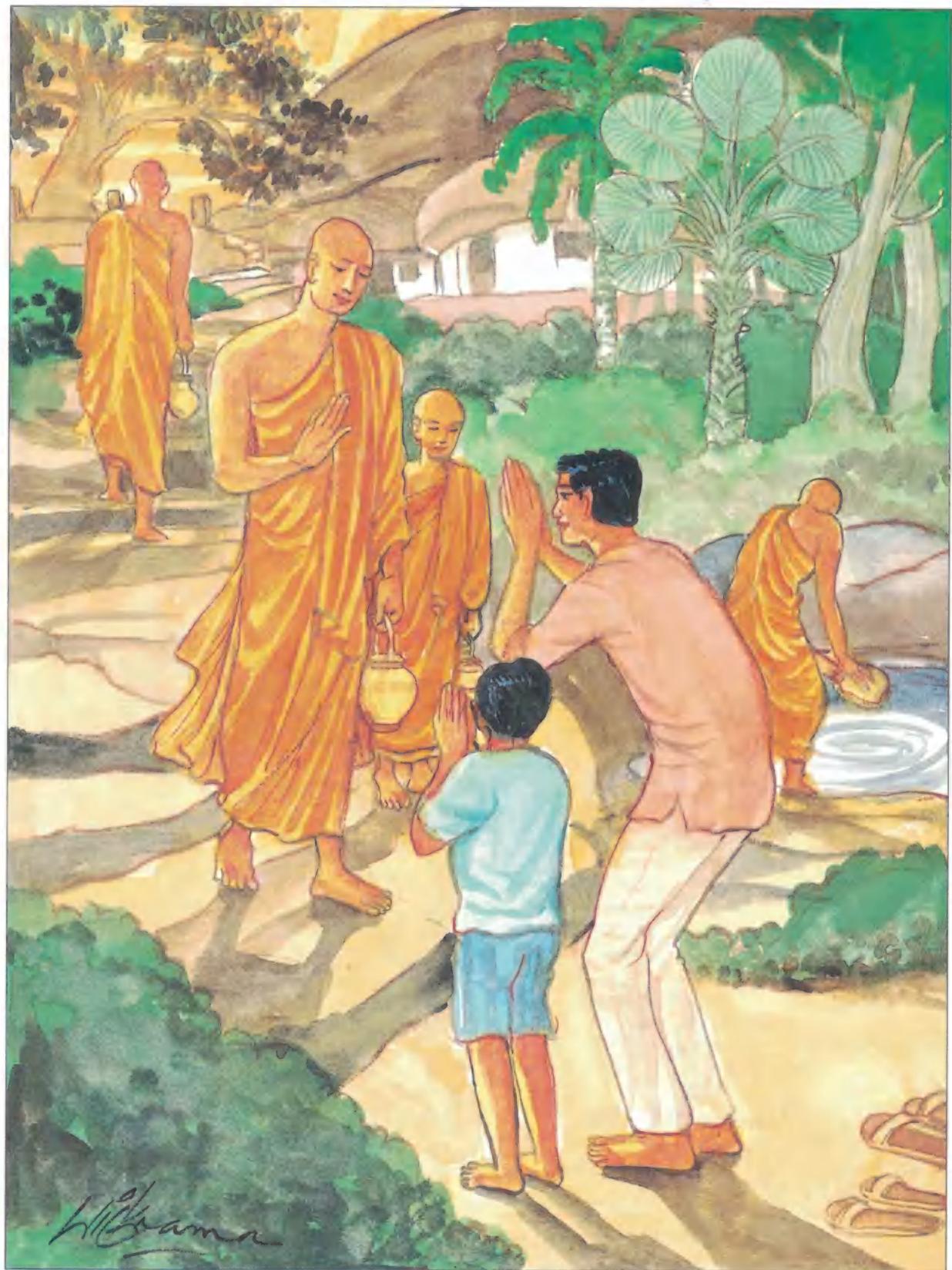
Even well-educated people should receive advice on some occasions. Therefore, the capacity to accept good advice, when given with wholesome intentions, is indeed a super-human quality.

Samanānañca Dassanam

Visiting Men of Religion

In moments of crisis or when problems threaten you it is essential to see religious persons to seek guidance. Seeing them helps to solve one's problems.

Seeing men of religion will help people to appreciate the value of spiritual life.



W. Channa

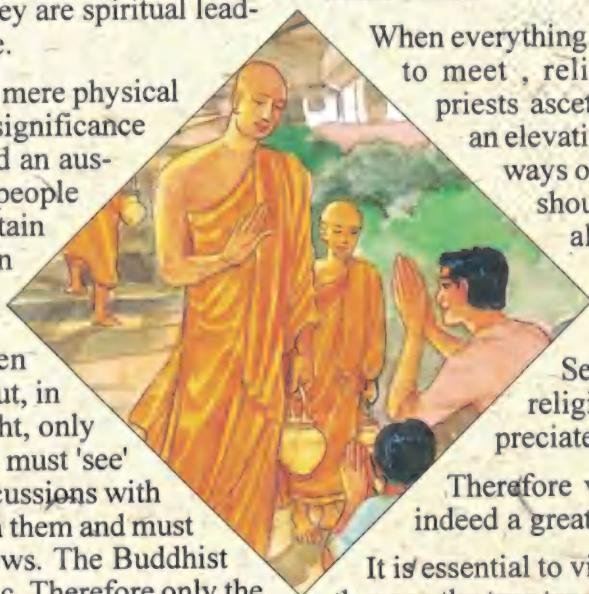
Visiting men of Religion

In all progressive societies, the need to obtain guidance from religious persons, is duly recognized. In ancient times, most rulers met with religious advisers to obtain a sense of direction in their state activities.

In the days of the Buddha, kings, Guild Leaders, and other prominent persons came to see the Enlightened One, to discuss and receive guidance. Visiting men of Religion, is also a gesture of honour. By seeing men of religion, those who visit them accept the fact that they are spiritual leaders to whom homage is due.

In the Indian tradition even mere physical 'seeing' of persons of high significance has always been considered an auspicious matter. Today too, people visit religious person to obtain their **darshan** (sight). In some religious systems mere 'darshan' (seeing) of religious persons has been thought of as a blessing. But, in the Buddhist way of thought, only seeing is not sufficient you must 'see' religious persons, have discussions with them, acquire wisdom from them and must live according to those views. The Buddhist practice is highly pragmatic. Therefore only the passive 'seeing' is not sufficient. One must visit religious people regularly and live in terms of their advice.

Visiting men of religion, is also helpful in some ways. Even if you did not have a discussion with them, merely visiting them too is an exalted experience. Through such visits, you enter into an atmosphere of spirituality, which is likely to have a transforming effect on those who visit.



When you visit monasteries and pay your respect to those religious persons, you are likely to be persuaded to lead a spiritually wholesome life.

The expression 'samananāñca Dassanam' (literary seeing religious persons) does not only mean that you meet and talk to men of religion. Through such visits, you also visit, the Dhamma.

The process of visiting religious persons can therefore mean also, coming to know religious truths better.

When everything is said and done, for people to meet , religious persons, bhikkhus, priests ascetics, monks, hermits etc. is an elevating experience. The subdued ways of life of religious people too should be attuned to the idea of allowing people to have a tranquillising effect on troubled minds. Then again religious people see them. Seeing priests, meeting men of religion will enable laymen appreciate the values of spiritual life.

Therefore visiting men of Religion is indeed a great blessing.

It is essential to visit religious priests because they are the true teachers. The lay people should see them in a manner that will profit them in their lay life. The lay people should not visit these religious individuals with the intention of fulfilling their narrow selfish needs.

Visits to religious persons will enable laymen to learn not only theoretical aspects of religion, but also their practical application. Besides, seeing religious persons is spiritually soothing.

Kālena Dhamma Sākaccā

Listening to Dhamma in due time

There are times when people need urgent advice. In due time people must receive such guidance to avoid serious developments. It is therefore beneficial to have discussions with religious people in due time.



Discussing Dhamma in due time

Discussing the teachings of the Buddha, is a noble object at any time. But, holding such discussions, when they are quite timely can be of tremendous benefit.

Most people go astray because they have not been able to get the proper religious discussion in due time. If people obtain the opportunity to discuss Dhamma matters at the proper time, crises can be averted. People, at times come to grief, because they have not been able to get the proper people to talk about moral issues. When such discussions are made possible, people can think about problems that trouble them, in time, before they come to a head. With such due discussions of moral issues, people can organize their lives harmoniously. Problems and hesitations that trouble people can get eroded if sessions to discuss moral issues can be given a routine place in the lives of people.

It is essential that such discussions should be well timed. For an individual, the right time to discuss problems with religious persons, elders and experienced people is the moment when they are in the throes of a crisis, or when they see a crisis impending.

Some people do not make use of religious discussions, for the solution of problems they face, because they just cannot find the time for them. If people consider themselves to be impatient, they must somehow find the time to discuss their problems with men of religion.

Discussions yield tremendous benefits. Through discussions, one can externalise conflicts that are within them. When discussions bring them out, it is easy to see them and solve them.

The proper time to have a religious discussion, is when one finds that one's mind is being troubled by anxieties and doubts. At times personal problems, make it difficult for a person, to pursue one's profession or occupation steadily. That is the time, a person must have a discussion of the moral issues that trouble him.

In the Zen Buddhist System, even very sophisticated businessmen and industrialists visit religious persons, to discuss issues that trouble them.

On one occasions, a businessman visited a Zen priest to discuss a matter that troubled him.

The priest did not give any answer but offered the businessman a cup of tea.

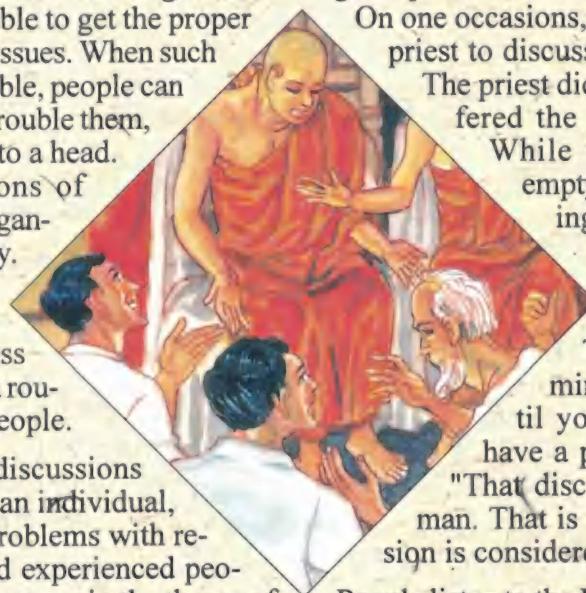
While the businessman held the empty cup, the priest went on pouring tea into it. Even when the tea brimmed over the priest went on pouring. The businessman said. 'Sir, it is full'.

The priest replied. Ah, your mind too is full of troubles. Until you put them out you cannot have a proper view of the situation.

"That discussion helped the businessman. That is why timely religious discussion is considered a high blessing.

People listen to the Dhamma routinely. But, most of those who listen do not have either the ability or the discipline to absorb what they heard. In such situations, discussion is the best means of elucidating difficulties and refining understanding. Discussion makes it possible to raise an issue immediately. Besides, explanations acquired through discussion remain indelibly etched in the mind.

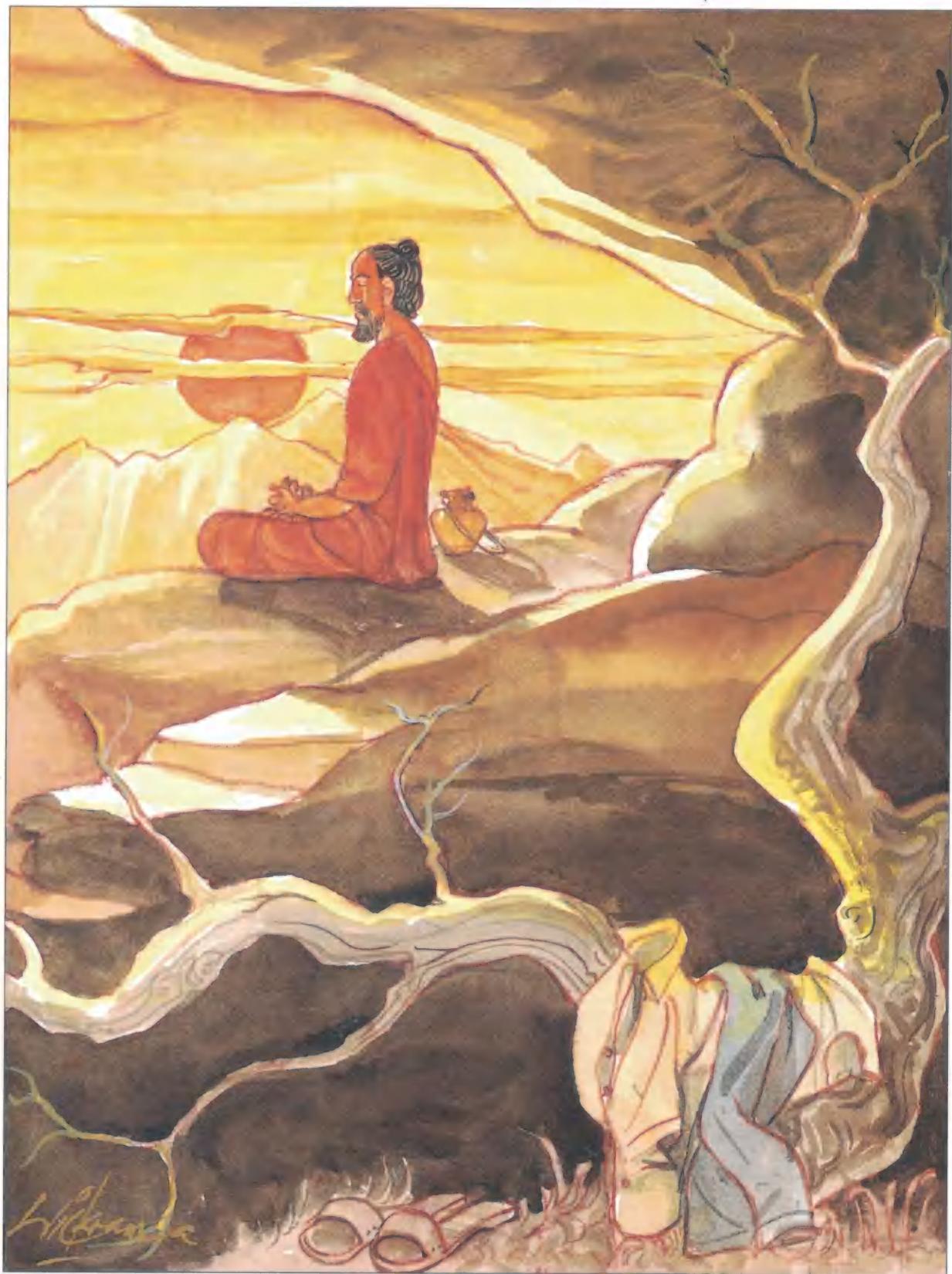
When an individual receives a clarity of vision through discussion, he or she will be able to pass this wisdom on to others.



Tapo

Austerity

To achieve spiritual heights one must practise meditation. Austerity is the self-restraint that comes about through sustained cultivation of the mind.



Austerity

The Pāli word 'Tapo' (austerity) was used by non-Buddhist religious persons to mean harsh ascetic practices, pursued by various people as a means of achieving deliverance. Some forms followed by those ascetics, were indeed rough. Some indulged in self-mortification. Others resorted to sensual satisfaction.

The Buddha did not approve of these extreme forms of austerity. Instead he used the word 'Tapo' to imply the discipline of the mind.

In the days of the Buddha, the kind of austerity that was practised by some, sounds quite strange. Some stood on one foot the whole time. Some slept on beds of nails. Others had nails piercing their bodies.

But, these austerities did not make them achieve true liberation.

In the Buddhist sense austerity implies the restraint of mind. The discipline acquired by a person through meditation is indeed an auspicious achievement. The disciplined attitude towards one's sense organs is also an austerity.

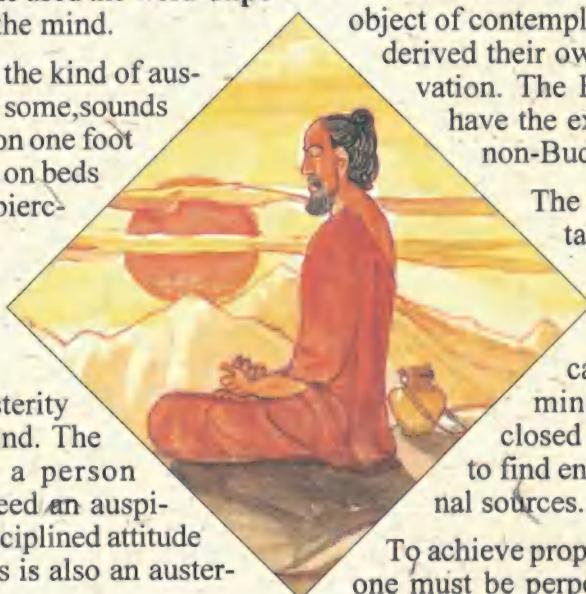
Once you achieve a certain stage of austerity you have to try and maintain it. If that does not happen your resolve is likely to relax. To maintain

this discipline a sustained spiritual effort is needed. This sustained effort is part of the austerity.

The Buddha's system of discipline has meditation as a main element in it.

The Buddha prescribed various forms of austerities depending on the personality of each individual.

In some instances the Buddha would select an object of contemplation. Some of the bhikkhus derived their own systems from their observation. The Buddha's austerities did not have the extreme characteristics of the non-Buddhist disciplines.



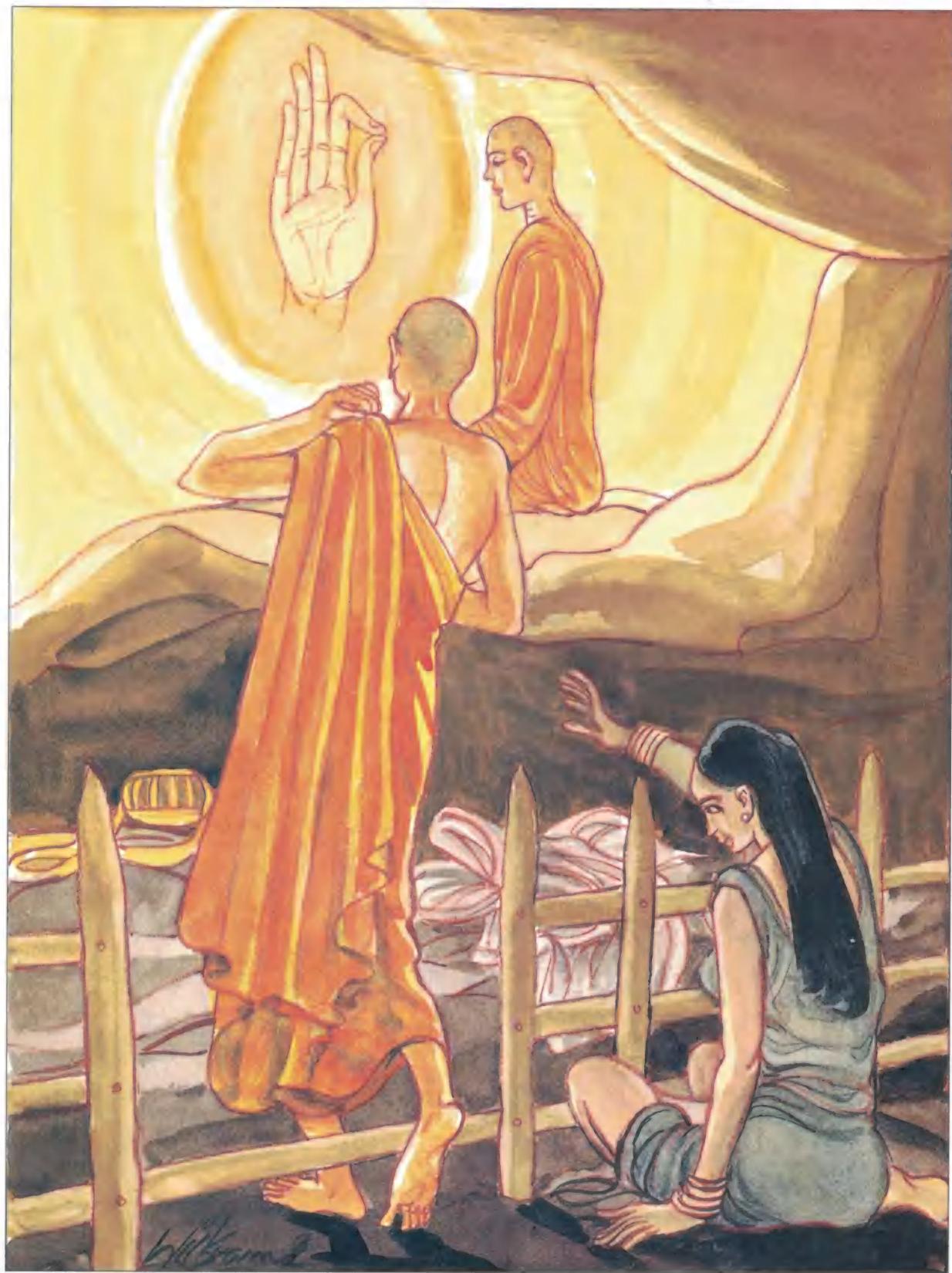
The essence of austerity is to establish the one-pointedness of mind. Once the mind is properly concentrated, sinful thoughts and blemishes cannot find their way into the mind. The mind is effectively closed to blemishes and sins that try to find entry into the mind from external sources.

To achieve proper concentration of the mind, one must be perpetually alert. Slothfulness is an obstacle both to spiritual and to worldly progress. In consequence, to achieve the highest results of the concentration of the mind one must be ever alert, dispelling laziness. 'Tapo' (Austerity) is therefore, considered one of the Greatest Blessings.

Brahmacariyam ca

Chaste Life

Life without excesses is a chaste way of existence. Chaste life enables people to understand the futility of transitory pleasures.



Chaste Life

The Buddha has described **Brahmacariya** as a great blessing.

In the Hindu systems **Brahmacariya** is the state of life of a young person before he becomes a householder. In the Buddhist System the interpretation is slightly different. The Buddhist teachings describe '**Brahmacariya**' as a life devoid of excesses of sensual indulgence. A deep realization of the exact nature of life enables people to understand the futility of transitory pleasure. Therefore a chaste life is upheld as a means of reaching a high state of life.

In some areas of Buddhism, **Brahmacariyam** is interpreted as "the best form of life" In certain texts it also means Buddha's dispensation (*sāsana*). At times this expression is also used to mean the ideal life that should be led by a monk. For ordinary people the expression '**Brahmacariya**' has yet another meaning. What they understand by this expression is leading a holy life. This also implies abstaining from sex. According to Buddhists along with **Brahmacariya**, the practice of the four - fold sublime states is also included. These four sublime states are **Mettā** (Loving-kindness), **Karunā** (compassion), **Muditā** (altruistic Joy) and **Upekkhā** (equanimity).

These states of sublime behaviour, make a person ready for high spiritual achievement.

The special significance of the expression '**Brahmacariya**' is moral purity.

Passions and desires tend to create innumerable problems to human beings. In the Buddhist system these passions and desires can be brought under control by moral practices and through meditation.

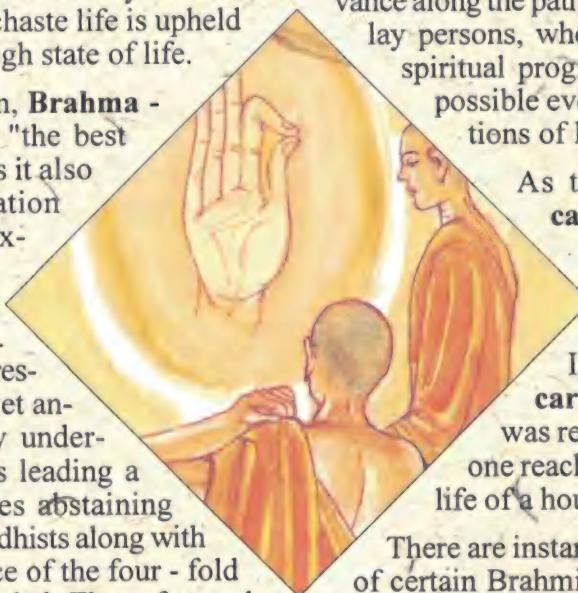
The chaste life can be lived even by lay persons. Through strict restraint, lay people too could advance along the path to high spirituality. For those lay persons, who are determined to achieve spiritual progress, meditating practice is possible even in the midst of the obligations of lay life.

As the chaste life (**Brahmacariya**) is the gateway to spiritual advancement it is classified as a great blessing - an auspicious matter.

In ancient lore "**brahma-cariya**" meant a chaste life. One was required to remain chaste until one reached the proper age to lead the life of a householder.

There are instances recorded in the scripture of certain Brahmins who remained chaste for forty-eight years.

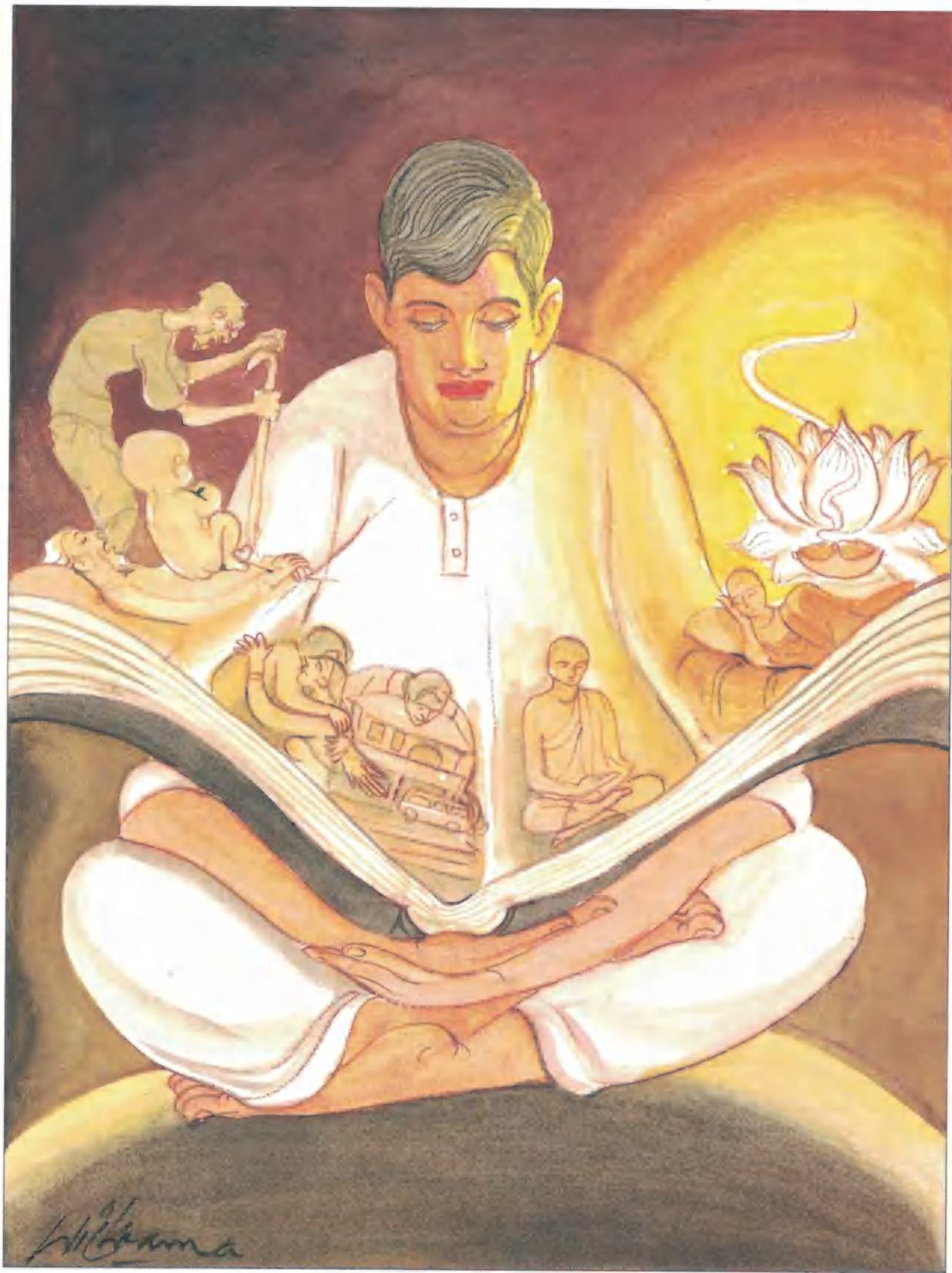
Restraint in sensual indulgence, when one has not yet reached the proper age for it, ensures good health. These people who exert restraint are alert in mind and sound in physical health.



Ariyasaccāna Dassanam

Understanding the four Noble Truths

The essence of the Buddhist system is the four Noble Truths. The four Noble Truths are - The Truth of Suffering - The Truth of the cause of Suffering - The cessation of suffering and the path to the cessation of suffering.



Insight into Noble Truths

The special characteristic of the Buddha's Teaching, is without any doubt the presentation of the four Noble Truths. These four Noble Truths are a great contribution to the religious thought of mankind, as they reduce the whole of human life to four truths, that anyone can test for one's own self.

The four Noble Truths form the briefest formula that sums up, with universal validity, the nature of the whole of life.

This spiritual discovery was made exclusively by the Buddha.

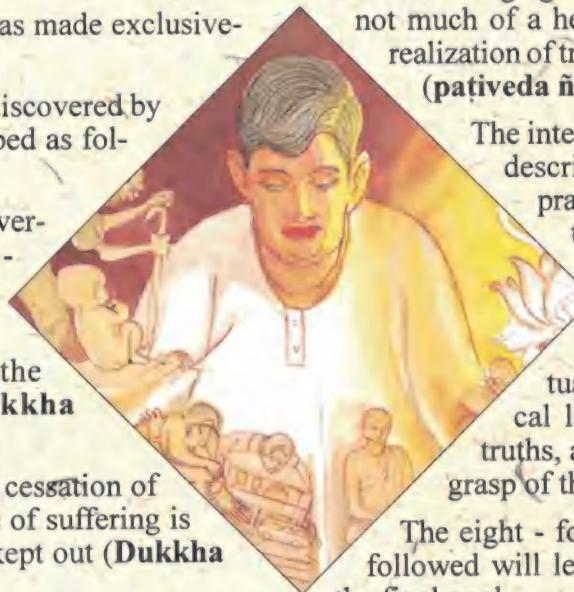
The four Noble Truths as discovered by the Buddha can be described as follows:

1. The Noble truth of universal suffering. All living forms are subject to suffering (**Dukkha saccā**)
2. The Noble Truth of the cause of suffering (**Dukkha Samudaya saccā**).
3. The Noble Truth of the cessation of suffering. When the cause of suffering is taken off its effect too is kept out (**Dukkha Nirodha Saccā**)
4. The Noble Truth of the path to the cessation of suffering. (**Nirodha Gamini Paṭipadā Saccā**)

The Noble Truth of the path to the cessation of suffering is the Noble eight - fold path (**Ariya atthaṅgika Magga**)

The eight steps of the Noble eight fold path are:

- i. **Sammā Dīṭṭhi** (Right view)
- ii. **Sammā Sankappa** (Right Intention)
- iii. **Sammā vācā** (Right Speech)
- iv. **Sammā Kammanta** (Right Action)
- v. **Sammā Ājīva** (Right livelihood)
- vi. **Sammā Vāyāma** - (Right effort)



vii. **Sammā Sati** - Right mindfulness.

viii. **Sammā Samādhi** - Right concentration

There are two ways in which an individual can assess these truths. One could appreciate these truths through the intellect. The second way to appreciate truth is by living it in practical terms.

The practical pragmatic way is the better method of understanding the Noble Truths.

The knowledge gained in the intellectual way is not much of a help. The practical approach - realization of truths based on real perceptions (**paṭiveda nāna**) is far superior.

The intellectual awareness of truths is described as worldly (**lokiya**). The practical, pragmatic awareness of the Noble Truths is described as (**Lokottara**) or "super - worldly".

The enumeration, the intellectual appreciation and the practical living of the four-fold noble truths, are all necessary to the proper grasp of the nature of universal life.

The eight - fold noble path, if assiduously followed will lead one to Nibbana, which is the final goal.

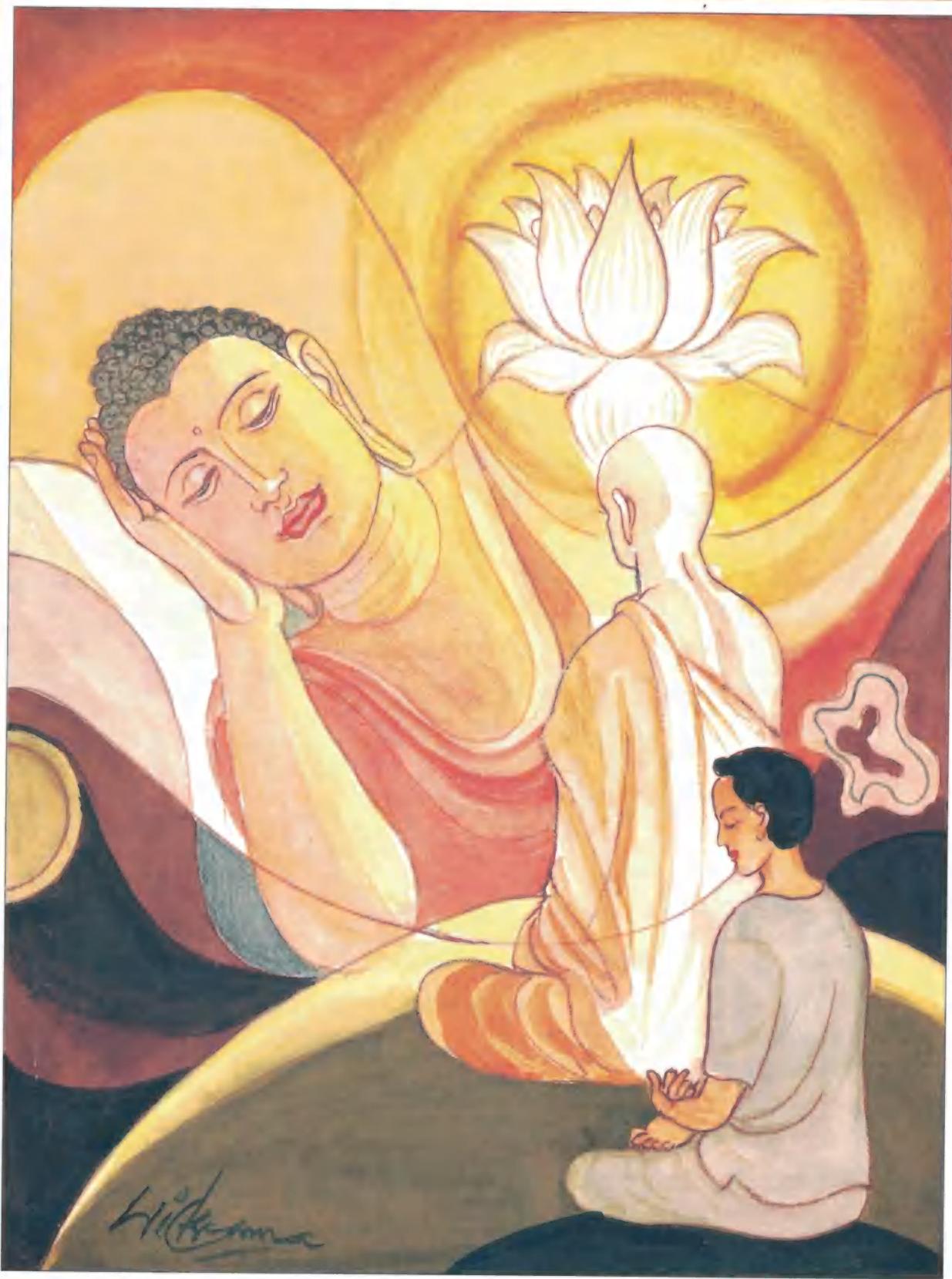
Understanding the four Noble Truths is without any doubt a great blessing, as it opens the gateway to Nibbana.

Insight into Noble Truths comes about through one's capacity to understand phenomena for what they really are. Once the nature of human life is understood for what it really is, illusions erode. One becomes capable of discarding certain things and concepts one kept clinging onto, cherishing them as treasures, though in terms of spiritual essence, they are trash. A child clings on to a bright piece of glass, mistaking it for a precious stone. When he understands what it really is, his mind is set free. Insight liberates individuals.

Nibbānasaccikiriyāca

The Realization of Nibbāna

Nibbāna is the complete cessation of suffering. The achievement of Nibbāna is the end - goal of the Buddhist system.



The Realization of Nibbana

All efforts of those who follow the Buddhist system, are directed towards one final Good, which is Nibbana. This state has been described in various ways.

The deathless, liberation, cessation of suffering are some of the ways in which Nibbana has been described. This is a state of highest bliss, which is free from desire, and all the defilements.

Human life is endlessly troubled by desires. But in the state of bliss supreme (Nibbana) all desires are extinguished - all clingings are totally gone. In Nibbana, which is the direct perception of truth, all theories and conflicting views disappear.

Nibbana is a state that cannot be articulated in verbal terms. It is a super-worldly state (**Lokottara**)

To achieve Nibbana a prolonged, unrelenting, unrelaxed effort is essential. The great effort is directed towards the eradication of the Roots of Evil (which determine recurring births). The Three Roots of Evil are **Lobha** (greed-desire to grasp) **Dosa** (hatred-ill-will) and **Moha**, (delusion) - These roots of evil stem from **avijjā** (ignorance).

These roots create fetters that bind human beings to the cycle of rebirth (**samsāra**)

There are ten fetters (**sam yojana**) that continue to keep beings in the ocean of existence. The ten fetters are:

- i. **Sakkāyaditthi** - belief in the permanence of personality.
- ii. **Vicikicchā** - Irrational Doubts.
- iii. **Silabbata - parāmāsa** - clinging to rituals and superstitions.
- iv. **Kāma - rāga** - craving for and attachment to sensual pleasures.
- v. **Vyāpāda** - ill - will.
- vi. **Rūpa - rāga** - craving for existence in fine - Material Worlds.
- vii. **Arūpa - rāga** - craving for existence in worlds without material form.
- viii. **Māna** - conceit
- ix. **Uddacca - Kukkucca** - Restlessness.
- x. **Avijjā** - ignorance

A strenuous effort is needed to break - off these fetters. On the dissolution of the first three fetters one becomes a **sotāpanna** (stream - winner) In the next stage the Noble one who has already become a stream - winner, attains **sakadāgāmi** (Once - returner) state. In the third stage the Noble one (**Ariya**) becomes **Anāgāmi** (Non returner) At this stage the Noble One becomes an **Arahant** - perfect one - fully liberated one.

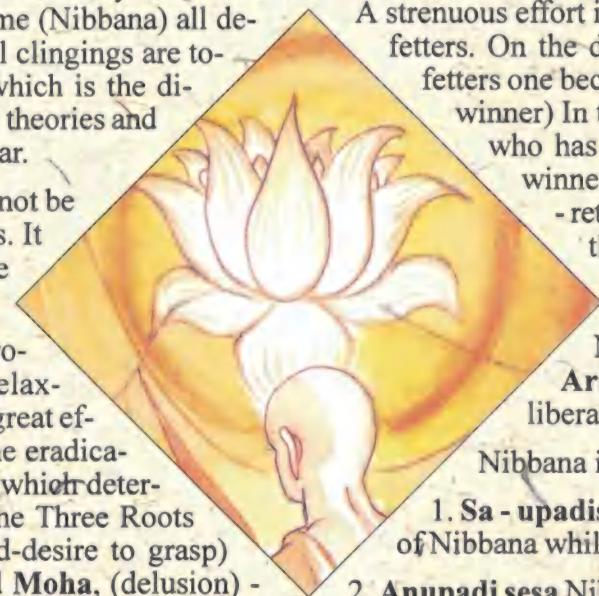
Nibbana is achieved in two way.

1. **Sa - upadisesa Nibbana** - Achievement of Nibbana while the Noble one is still alive.

2. **Anupadisesa Nibbana** - The total dissolution of all psycho - physical elements as when the Buddha or an Arahant achieves total demise (**parinibbāna**)

This way realization of Nibbana, or receiving a glimpse of Nibbana is indeed a great blessing.

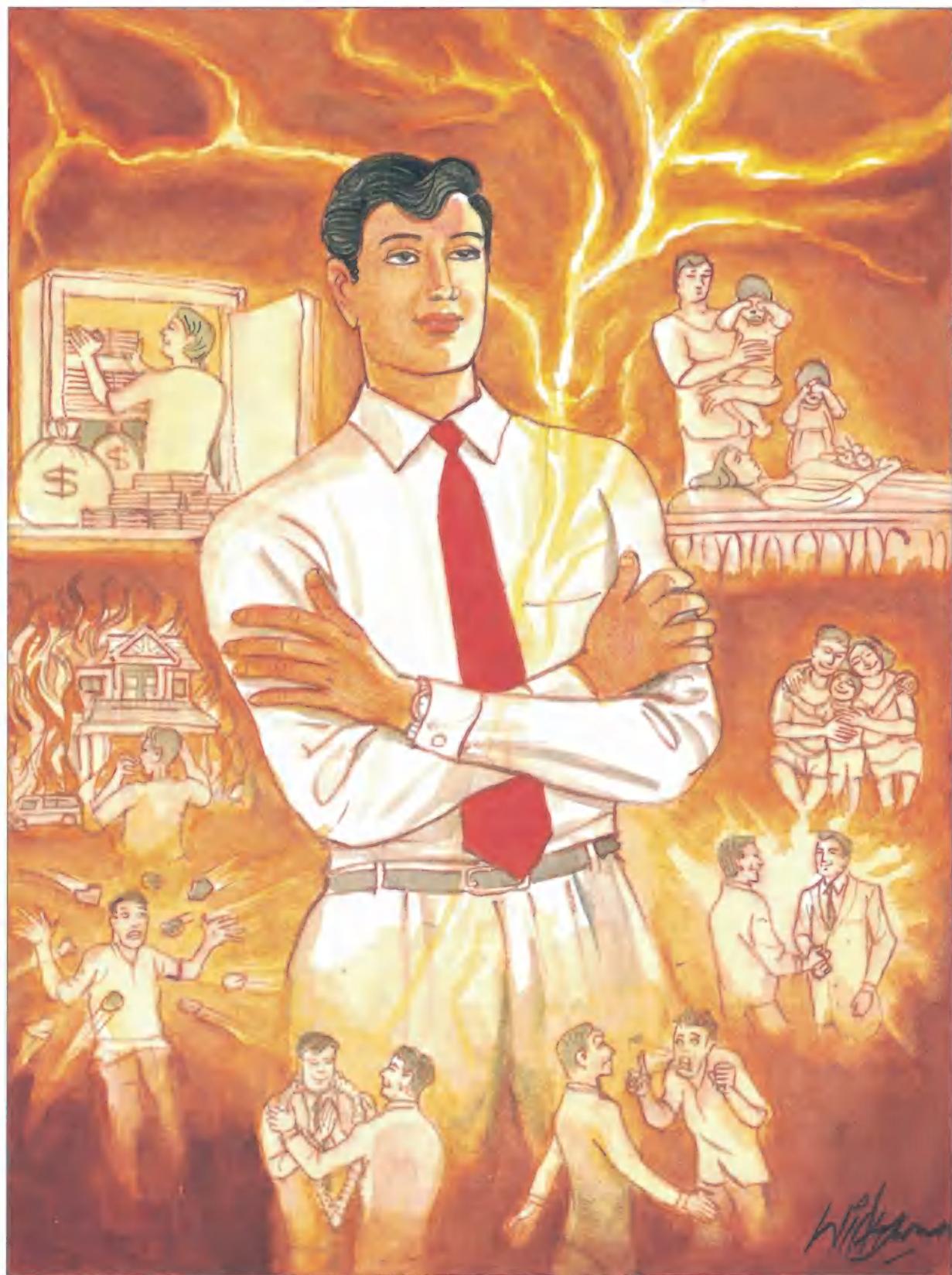
Nibbana - eternal bliss - cannot be easily articulated. In most instances, Nibbana has been defined in negative terms - just as the nature of land is described by the tortoise who knows both land and water, to a fish which knows only water. Similarly, it is difficult for mere worldlings to comprehend the nature of Nibbana.



Puṭṭhassa Loka Dhammehi Cittam Yassa Na Kampati

Mind Unshaken

Ordinary people tend to fluctuate in mind. When they are affected by the eight vicissitudes of life they experience ups and downs of the spirit. But, the spiritually advanced person remains mind unshaken.



Mind Unshaken

It is a great Blessing to remain unshaken in mind, though tossed about by worldly vicissitudes. It is the nature of the minds of ordinary men and women to fluctuate, in terms of the changes of their fortunes. But, those who are developed in mind through sustained mental discipline can remain unaffected by these ups and downs of life. It is said that the wise people can remain without fluctuating without ups and downs-when touched either by joy or by sorrow.

**Sukhena putthā, athavā dukhena
nuccāvacām panditā dassayanti**

"Whether touched by joy or by sorrow, wise people (**panditā**) do not display fluctuations". Such advanced people with minds unshaken can get close to spiritual victory.

'Loka-dhamma' is the expression by which worldly vicissitudes are described. These affect the lives of all ordinary people.

These **Loka-Dhammas**, which are part and parcel of worldly life are classified into eight.

These are described as "**Attha Loka - dhammā'** - the eight - fold worldly vicissitudes. These eight are:

1. **Lābha** (gain)
2. **Alābha** (loss)
3. **Ayaso** (disgrace)
4. **Yaso** (fame)
5. **Nindā** (blame)

6. **Pasamsā** (praise)

7. **Sukha** (happiness)

8. **Dukkha** (sorrow)

Ordinary people whose lives are governed by the ten fetters (**dasa - samyojana**) are subject to these fluctuations. These ordinary folk are described as '**Puthujana**'.

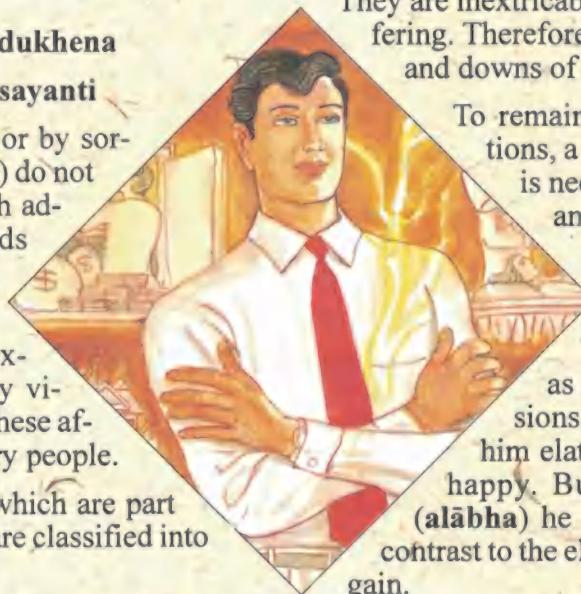
They are inextricably bound to the wheel of suffering. Therefore, they get affected by the ups and downs of worldly fortune.

To remain unshaken by such fluctuations, a strong discipline of the mind is needed. We can examine an example of how the mind fluctuates when touched by these changing fortunes. An individual gains something.

This is a matter for pleasure as it has added to his possessions. This **Lābha**, (gain) makes him elated. He enjoys it. He is quite happy. But, when he suffers a loss (**alābha**) he is utterly depressed in total contrast to the elation felt when he achieved a gain.

All the fluctuations of fortune affect the mind that way. Therefore if an individual can remain unshaken touched by worldly vicissitudes it is indeed a great blessing.

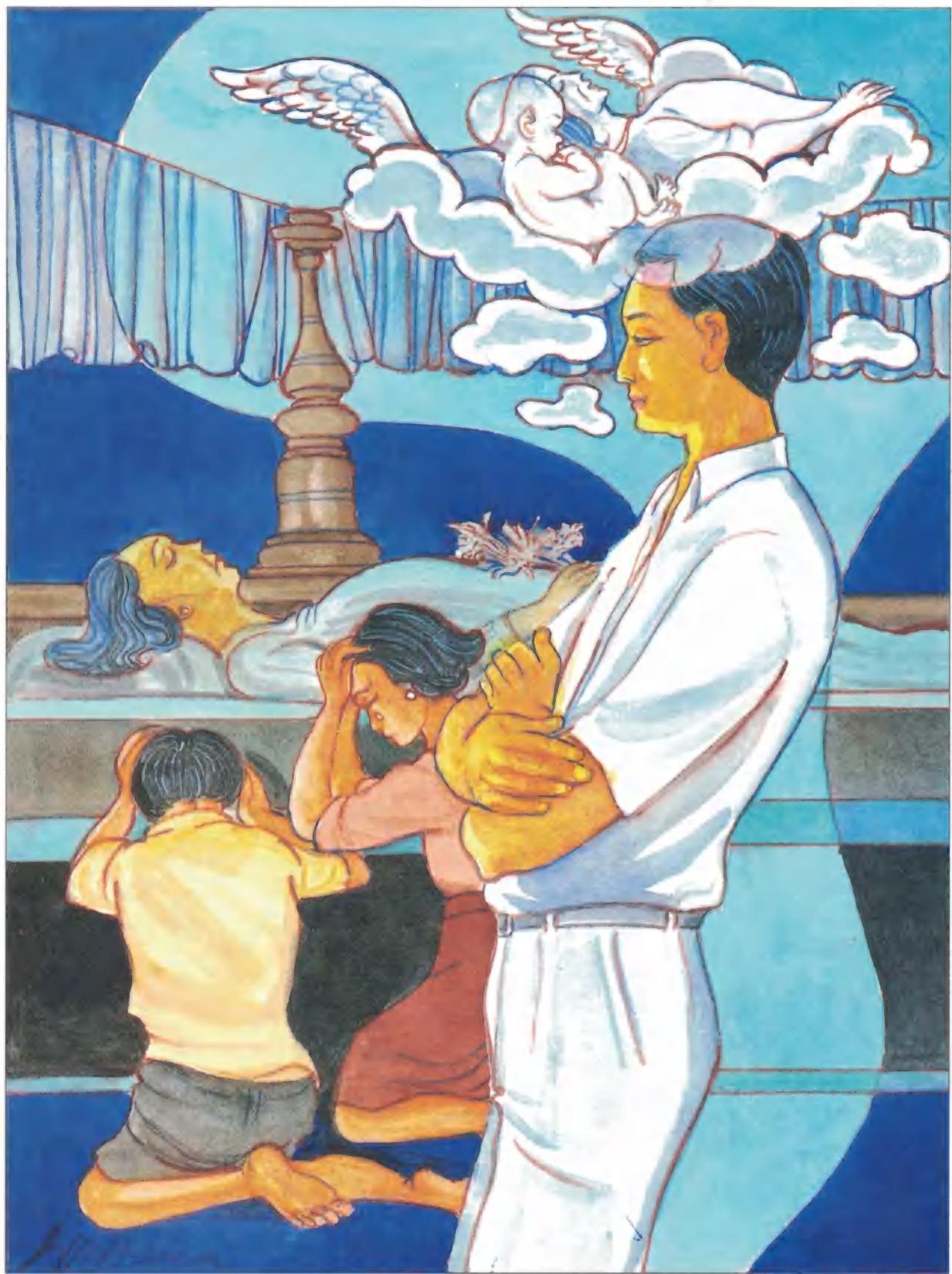
An individual becomes capable of remaining unshaken in mind, when touched by the fluctuations of worldly vicissitudes, only if that individual has been able to achieve the equanimity of mind. This state of mind dawns only when a person realizes the true nature of life.



Asokam

Sorrowlessness

A spiritually developed person remains unsaddened by situations that evoke sorrow. He can look steadfastly at the nature of life and remain calm and sorrowless.



Sorrowlessness

All human beings are affected by sorrow. Human life is full of situations that cause sorrow, lamentation, depression, and frustration. When we have to separate from loved ones it is a sorrow. When we have to be with those people we do not like, that is sorrow. If we do not get some thing that we yearn for that too leads to suffering. Considered this way, the whole of human existence is fraught with sorrow.

These situations that bring about sorrow, make us utterly unhappy. People when they are unhappy cannot fulfil their worldly and spiritual tasks. Therefore ability to remain sorrowless is indeed an outstanding achievement.

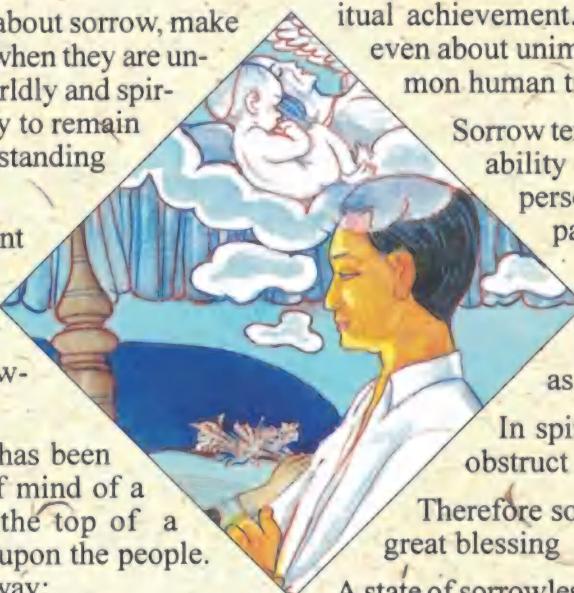
A great sense of detachment from the endless turmoil of worldly life is essential for an individual to be able to attain the state of sorrowlessness.

This sense of detachment has been compared with the state of mind of a person who has reached the top of a mountain and looks down upon the people. It has been described this way:

**"Paññā pāsāda māruihā
Asoko sokhinimpajam
Pabbatattho va bummatthe
Dhīro bāle avekkhati"**

"The steadfast one, having reached the mountain - peak of wisdom, looks down upon the ignorant sorrowing ones, without sorrow"

To remain sorrowless one must also give up the sense of victory and defeat:



**"Jayam veram pasavati
dukkham seti parājito.
upasanto sukkham seti
Hitvā jaya parājayam"**

"Victory gives rise to hate. Those defeated experience sorrow. Those who are of sorrowless mind, rest happily, giving up both victory and defeat".

Being able to remain above sorrow is a great spiritual achievement. The occurrence of sorrow, even about unimportant trivialities, is a common human trait.

Sorrow tends to undermine the spiritual ability of a person. Sorrow erodes a person's efficiency and one's capacity to make an effort.

If you grieve for one's loss, the time you spend over grieving leads to other losses as well.

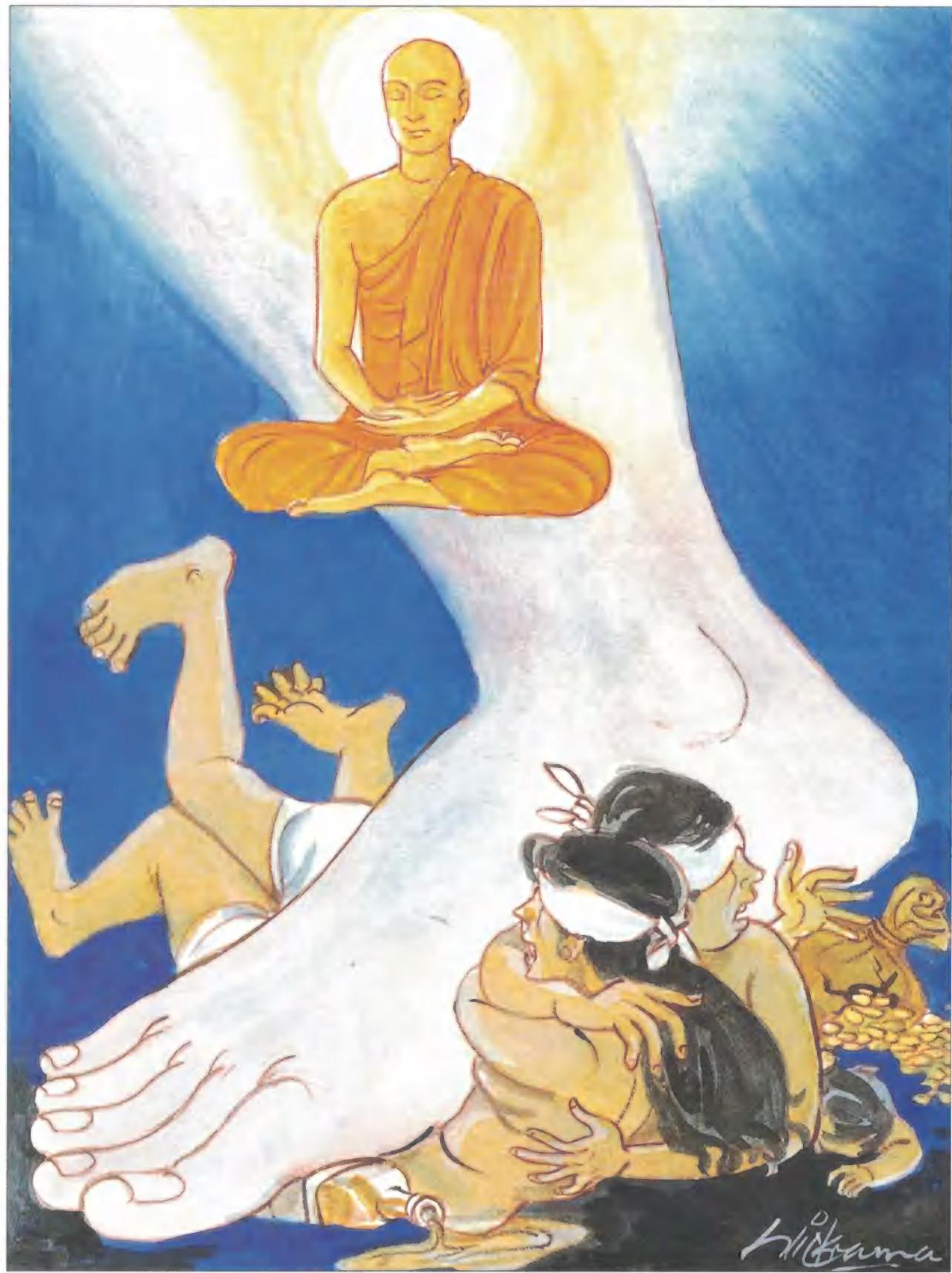
In spiritual terms, sorrow tends to obstruct the understanding of reality. Therefore sorrowlessness is considered a great blessing - an auspicious matter.

A state of sorrowlessness can be reached through the contemplation of the nature of death. Thus Buddha adopted various methods to make men and women realize that all human beings come upon causes for sorrow. To remain sorrowless in such contexts, a deep understanding is essential. Those who can perfectly see the true nature of death, which is the ultimate cause of sorrow for human beings, can remain sorrowless in its presence.

Viraja

Lack of Defilements

Defilements cloud the mind. When defilements fall off, one's mind becomes clear and perfect. Such a mind can see reality steadily.



Lack of Defilements

At birth, the mind of beings is perfectly clear and unclouded. As people grow up various worldly conditions begin to affect the mind. These defilements cloud the mind. When the human mind is clouded by defilements, this situation can lead to various disasters. The defiled mind can bring about tragedies and situations that are unfortunate.

Passion (**rāga**) is among the foremost defilements. An individual whose mind is affected by **rāga** tends to resort to irrational activities. The outcome of such deeds could be destructive. Considered this way to be devoid of defilements, is indeed a great blessing.

To eradicate defilements is not at all an easy task. To achieve liberation, defilements have to be fully uprooted. Even if remnants are left behind, the defilements are likely to grow again. This is compared to the uprooting of a tree.

This situation is described thus:

"Yathāpi mūle anupaddave dalhe
 "Chinno'pi rukkho punare' va rūhati
 Evampi tanhānusaye anūhate
 Nibbattati dukkham idam punappunam"

(Just as a tree that is felled shoots up again, if its roots are still firm, so this suffering grows up again while latent craving is unremoved")

Of all the defilements, **tanhā** (craving) is considered the most harmful. It is extremely difficult to get rid of craving fully. But, if an individual succeeds in uprooting the most destructive of defilements, which is craving, it is a great spiritual victory. This has been described thus.

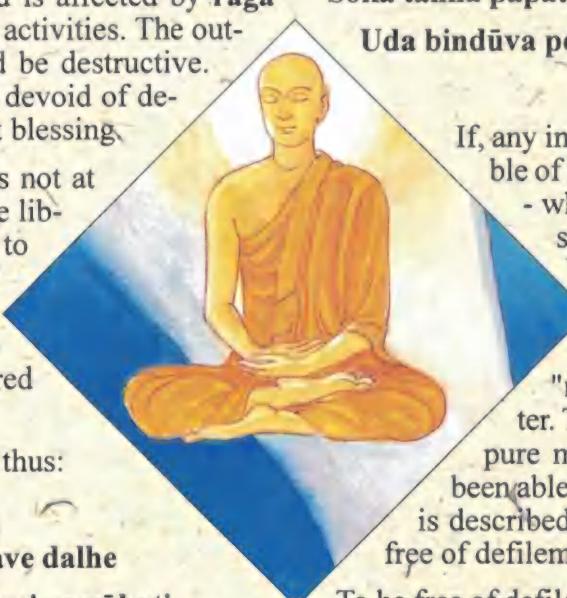
**"Yo cetam sahate jammam
 Tanham loke duraccayam
 Soka tanhā papātanti
 Uda bindūva pokkhare"**

If, any individual in this world is capable of fully uprooting craving **tanhā** - which is difficult to quell, from such an individual sorrow falls off, like water - drops from a lotus leaf"

Defilements are described as "**rajas**"-dust or polluting matter. This is because they pollute the pure mind. An individual who has been able to get rid of these defilements is described as a '**Viraja**'- person who is free of defilements.

To be free of defilements is indeed a highly auspicious matter.

When the mind is clouded by the dust of defilements and blemishes, thinking gets clouded, too. Through imperfect thinking, erroneous actions ensue. Thus, when the mind is clouded by the dust of such defilements as passion and hate, human life deteriorates.



Khema

Sense of Security

Those persons who have shattered bondages are free and have no anxieties.
They feel liberated and experience a supreme sense of security.



Perfect Sense of Security

All ordinary human beings feel insecure. They feel threatened. They see various forms of menaces around them. Some are insecure due to reasons of economic shortcomings. They feel that their future is uncertain. Some others feel insecure because of health factors. They are not sure what kind of health problem they will have to face.

People at times experience a sense of unprotectedness. They have vague fears and unarticulated trepidations. Some people feel insecure throughout their life time.

With increasing crises at international level, most human communities experience a disturbing sense of insecurity. Conflicts deepen this sense of threat.

Over and above these worldly preoccupations many people feel psychologically insecure.

They do not have a sense of satisfaction in whatever they did. This leads them to thoughts of gloom. The tendency on the part of some people to take to intoxicants and destructive drugs derives directly from this widespread sense of insecurity. The whole human community seems to be moving along without any perceptible sense of security.

Whatever may be the cause of insecurity, in the last analysis it acquires a spiritual quality. All material solutions fail at the end in restoring security. Drinks and drugs do not offer a lasting solution.

Therefore, the final and firm sense of security comes from mental culture and deep meditation.

The tranquillity that comes from meditation is described as the "most supreme form of security".

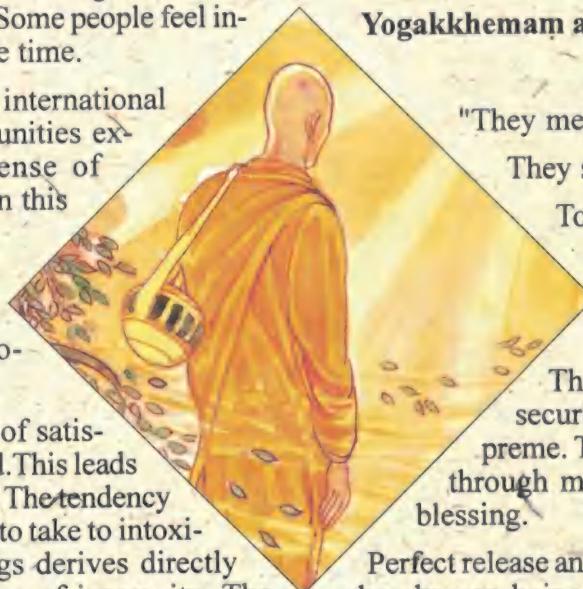
"

Te jhayino sātatkā

Niccam dalha parakkamā

Phusanti dhlirā nibbānam

Yogakkhemam anuttaram"



"They meditate constantly

They strive hard and ceaselessly

To reach Nibbana

which is the supreme form of security free from bonds".

Therefore, the highest sense of security is Nibbana - the Oasis supreme. The sense of security achieved through meditation therefore is a high blessing.

Perfect release and total security can come only when human beings are free of four-fold bondages or shackles. These four are: 1) **Kāma Yoga** - the shackle of sensuality; 2) **Bhava Yoga** - the shackle of self-hood; 3) **Ditthi Yoga** - the shackle of fallacies, and 4) **Avijjā Yoga** - the shackle of ignorance which prevent people from realizing the Four Noble Truths.

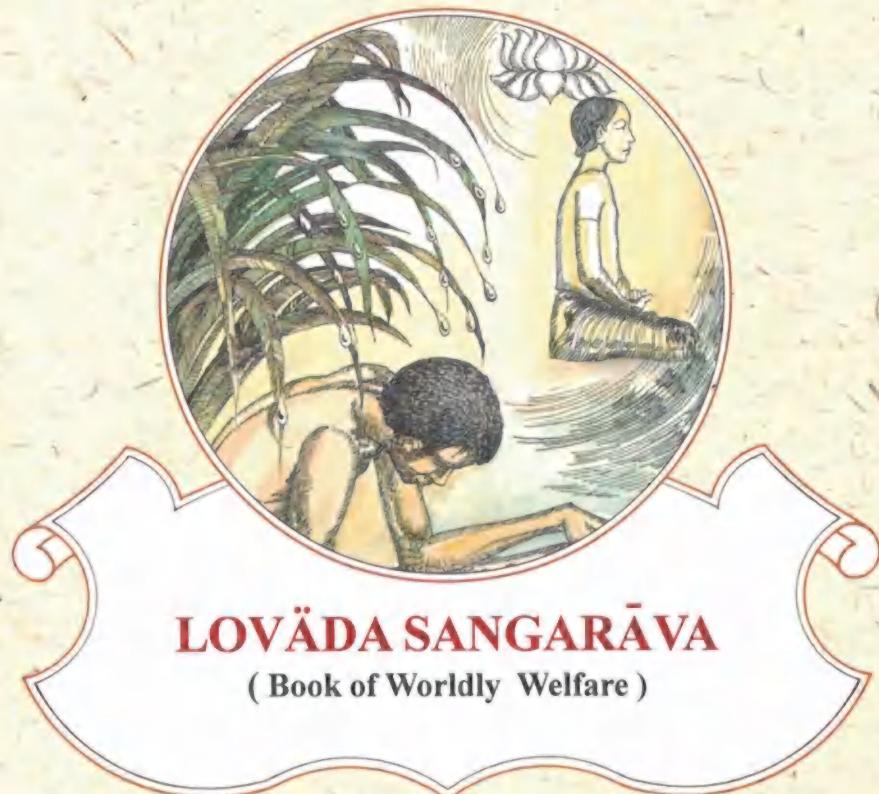
When one is free of these four bondages, one is liberated and reaches the state of **Khema** - perfect security.

Adoration

By The Deities

At The end of the Discourse on the Highest Blessings, the Deities showered their adoration upon the Buddha-The Supremely Enlightened One





LOVÄDA SANGARĀVA

(Book of Worldly Welfare)

INTRODUCTION

In the ancient world where writing was a proficiency limited to a handful of highly learned men, (very often ten religious persons), books had one primary purpose. They were written, above all, to instruct people in ethical and moral behaviour. Even when a work was couched in poetry, the dominant intention was didactic. Ancient Asian literature is replete with such works of instruction that provided guidelines to both religious and secular pursuits.

The Sri Lankan literary tradition of old was amply inspired by works produced in India by authors who had evolved into the status of sages. They distilled their precious wisdom into works that were compiled for the benefit of those who had to be directed along the correct path of morality. In the literature of that ilk in Sri Lanka, many of the works were produced in the form of verse, as rhythmic lines were mnemonically more effective than prose.

The present work is being introduced in an illustrated version as it is among the more popular didactic poems in Sri Lanka. The title of the work is "Loväda Sangarava", and was originally written in Sinhala which is the language of the majority in Sri Lanka. This work was written way back in the 15th Century by an erudite Buddhist monk named Ven. Vidagama Maitreya. He has many classical works to his credit.

The lilting rhythm of the verses makes the original version eminently suitable for recital. In Sri Lanka children are trained to recite these stanzas rhythmically, so that they will be able to absorb the didactic content more effectively. The central lesson that is taught in this work, with repeated emphasis, is the fleeting nature of life. Such material is not exclusively for juvenile audiences.

The didactism in this work is equally apt for adult users too.

The work has been used without interruption for centuries. But, during those centuries, these verses were never interpreted visually, in a comprehensive manner before this.

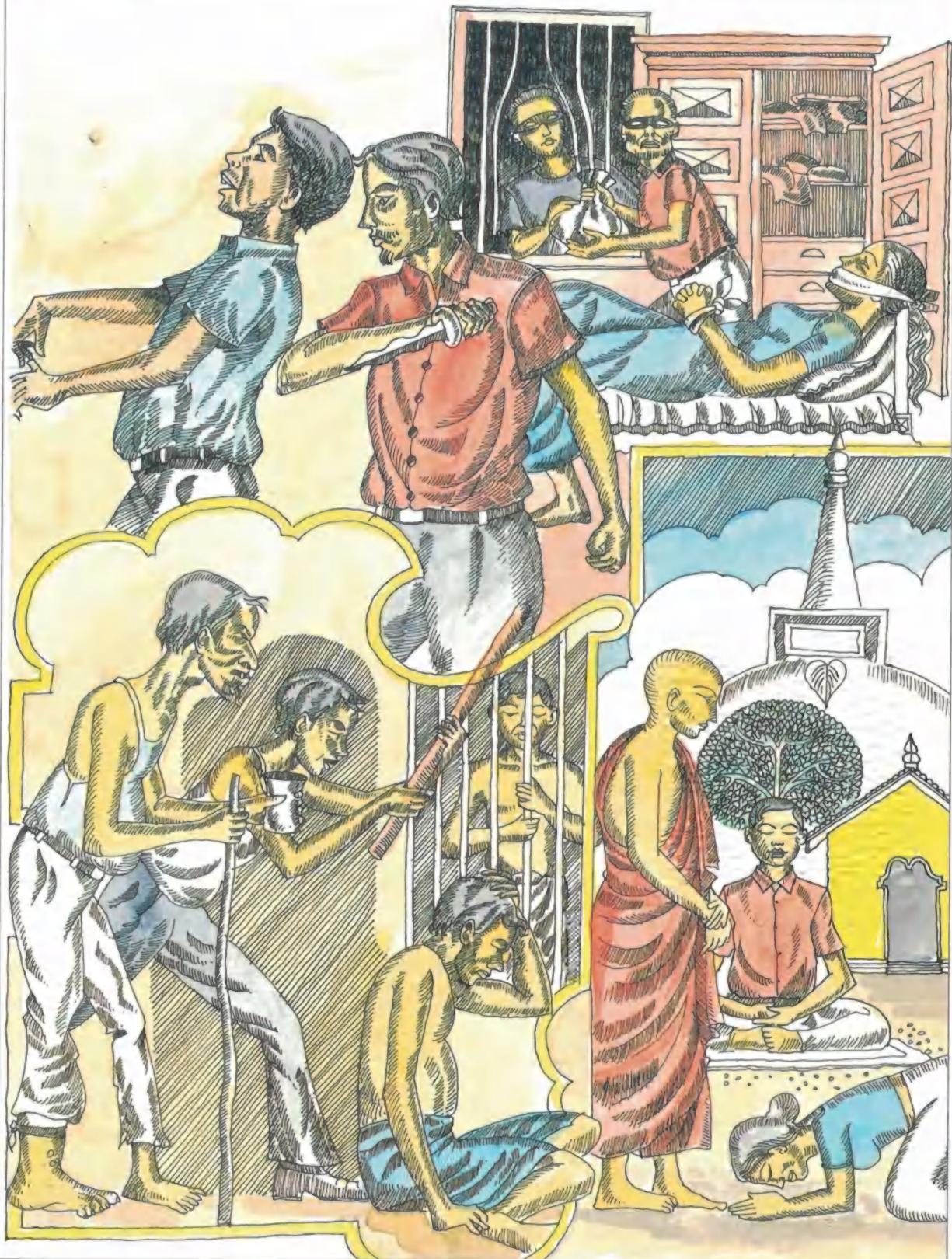
The emphasis on the impermanence of life makes the readers and listeners ask significant questions about the world and about human existence. They get persuaded that virtuous behaviour is the only anti-dote to this impermanence as it ensures birth in a wholesome state in the next life.

The verses in this work are eminently suited for pictorial representation as the poetry uses telling images profusely to drive home the central points. In consequence, it has been possible for the especially commissioned illustrations that adorn this work to bring out the lessons implicit in these verses, through impressive visual motifs. This pictorial element has an appeal to both the children and the adults alike. The stark futility of thoughtless indulgence in sensual pleasures comes through vividly in this illustrated version. "Loväda Sangarava" (The Book of Worldly Welfare) is a startlingly effective contribution to modern religious literature, with the potentiality to prod the readers awake into the reality of the human condition.

The translations of the Stanzas from "Lovada Sangarava", that appear in the Commentary pages are quoted from the work entitled "Nagarjuna's Moral Philosophy and Sinhala Buddhism". We are grateful to the author of that work- Professor David J. Kalupahana - for this courtesy

Waste not human life

When you do five types of sins you suffer in this birth. After death, you suffer endless tortures in woeful states. Therefore acquire merit in this world of humans. Do not waste this human life which has been obtained after a long time in existence



THE SINNERS

Pas	pav koṭa meṭanat läba	sōkaya
gos	nirayē duk viñditi	anēkaya
räs	koṭa in pin me minis	lōkaya
sis	nokarav kalakin lat mē	kaya

Having performed the five-fold demerit and having experienced sorrow here, one goes to hell and experience multiple suffering. Therefore, accumulating merit in the human world, let not this life, obtained after a (long) time, be rendered empty.

Commentary

Those who are guilty of the five forms of sins, suffer in this world. Those five are : **pānātipāta** - the taking of life; **adattādānā** - taking what is not given; **kāmamicchācāra** - sexual misconduct; **musāvāda** - uttering of falsehoods; and **surāmeraya** - taking intoxicants.

These sinners are born in woeful states, after their death. There, too, they continue to suffer exceedingly. Since this is the fate that awaits those who commit sin, it is the urgent duty of those born in this world of humans to amass meritorious actions. Human beings should recourse to this method, so that the physical form they have inherited after a long effort will not be purposelessly squandered.

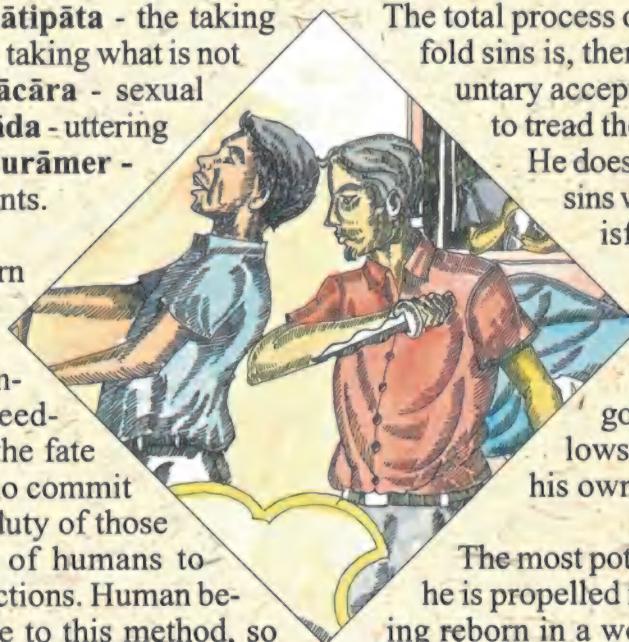
These five sins can be avoided by adhering to five precepts. These five precepts are not dictated from a divine authority or from any other external source. They are laws that an

individual imposes upon one's own self.

The total process of eradicating the five-fold sins is, therefore, a matter of voluntary acceptance of the individual to tread the path of virtue.

He does not avoid the five-fold sins with the intention of satisfying a creator. The total dedication to the fulfilment of the five precepts is entirely for one's own good. The individual follows these five precepts on his own free choice.

The most potent incentive by which he is propelled is the possibility of being reborn in a woeful state after death. He has to look on this birth as an unparalleled opportunity he has received to garner all the merit he can, to ensure that his next birth will be in a pleasant state, and not at all in a woeful state. The admonition in this Stanza is to see to it that the opportunity received should not be squandered away in any way.



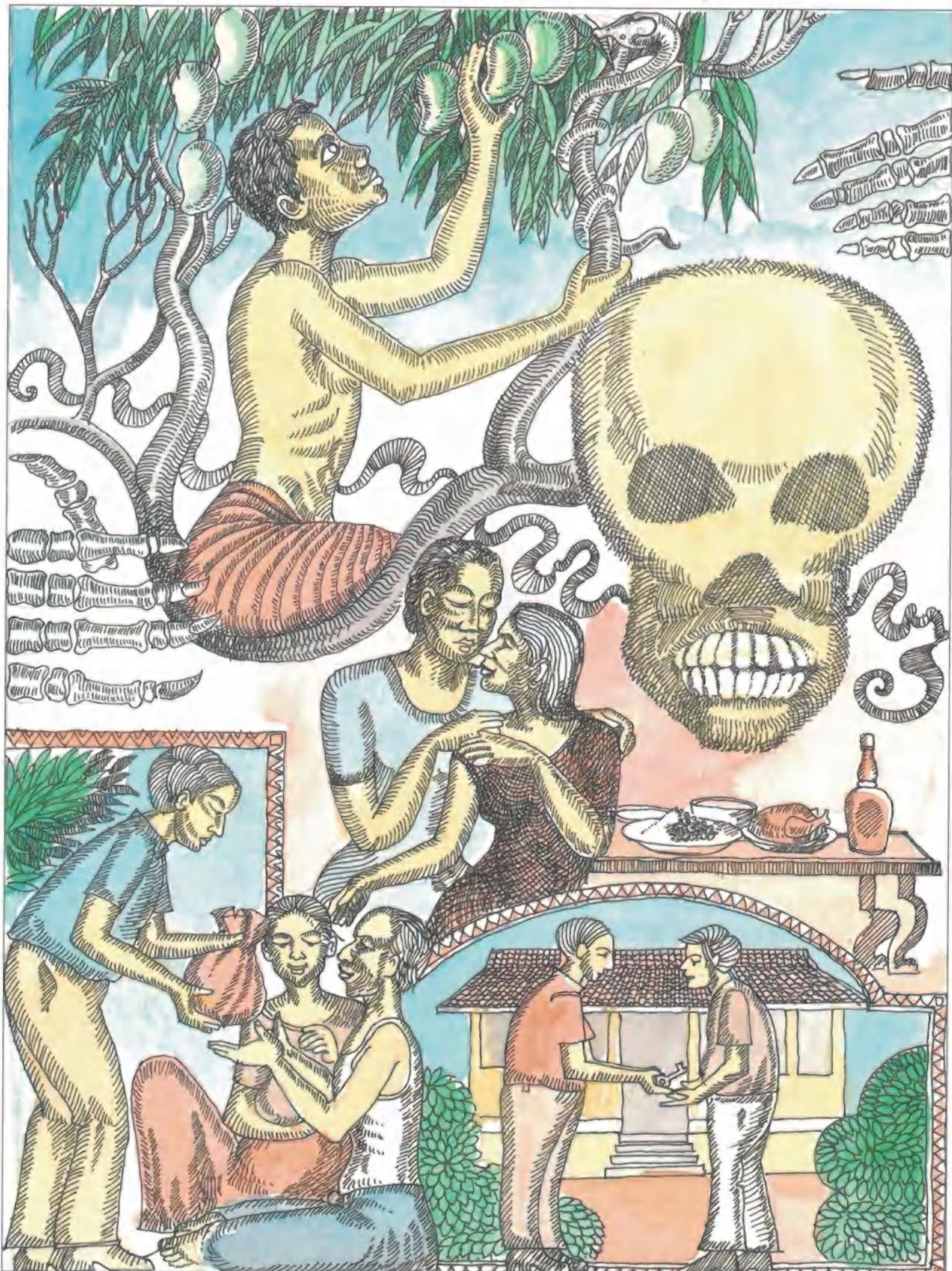
Poisonous mangoes

What is the use of the mental happiness one gets from sensual pleasures?

It is like the pleasures one gets from eating poisonous mangoes.

Death will come after you soon.

Therefore, if you are skilful, acquire only merit.



POISONOUS MANGOES

Kannan	men visa ambapala	rissē
man san	-tos kara kima pala	sessē
dän dän	eyi maruvā pasu	passē
in pin	maya kaṭayutu nam	dassē

What is the purpose of this little mental satisfaction (derived from the pleasures of sense) similar to that of those who eagerly eat the poisonous mango-fruit? Death may follow sooner or later. Hence, with skill, one ought to perform merit.

Commentary

The sensual pleasures that worldlings indulge in are not delights in the real sense. To most people who are caught up in these pleasures they seem utterly satisfying. But, if one were to pause and consider what these activities really mean, one is likely to get shockingly disillusioned.

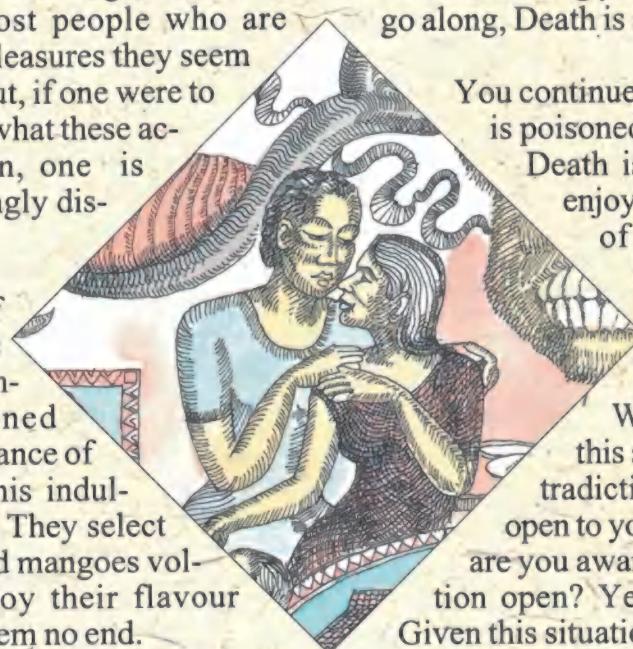
The enjoyment of sensual pleasures is very much like the enjoyment of poisoned mangoes. In the instance of these worldlings, this indulgence is not forced. They select to eat these poisoned mangoes voluntarily. They enjoy their flavour greatly and relish them no end.

But what is the very limited result you get after that act of relishing the poisoned mangoes? It does not bring about any benefit at

all. Meantime, what is truly happening? Death is stalking you quietly. Even as you go along, Death is after you.

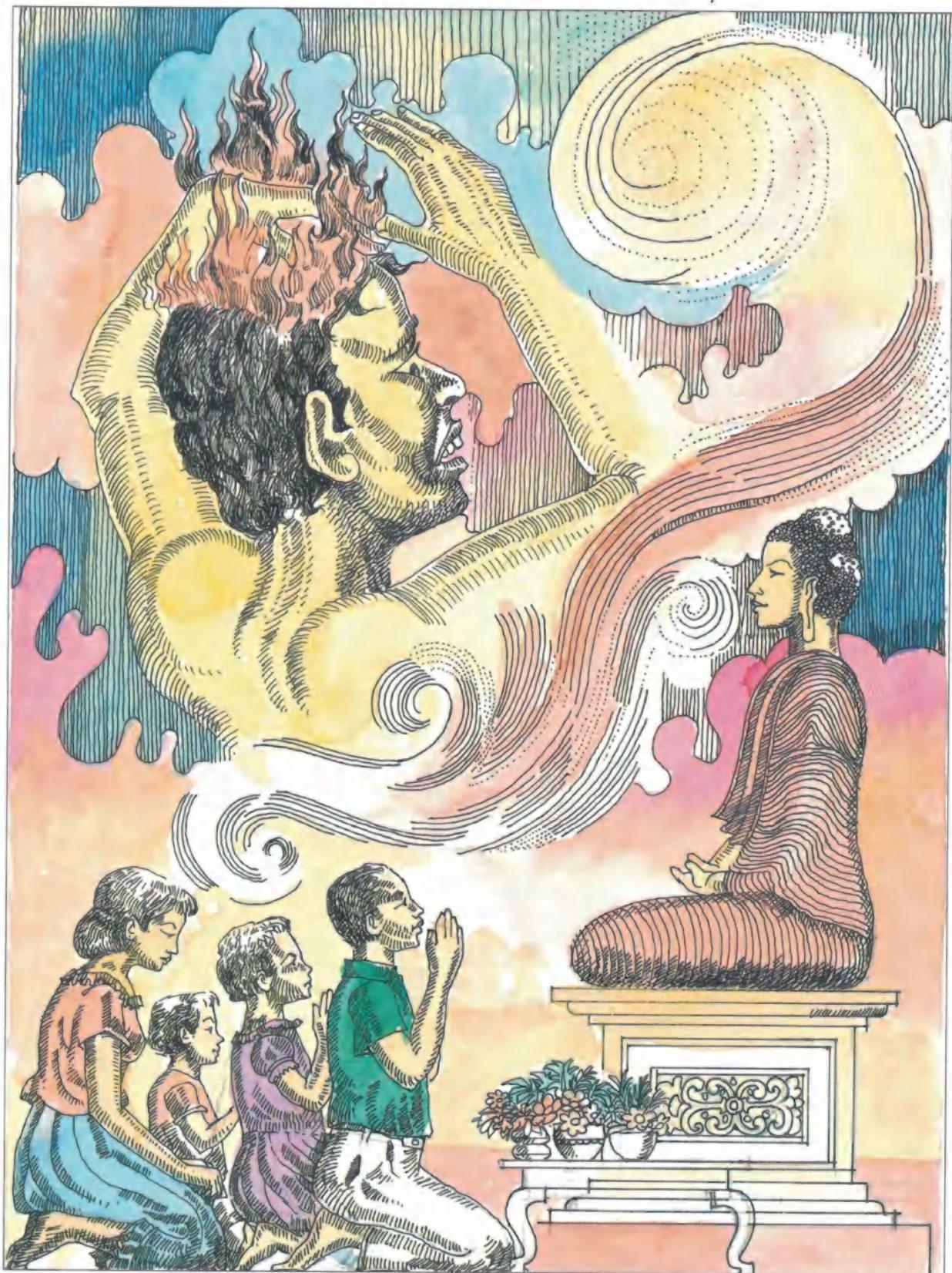
You continue to relish a mango that is poisoned, totally unaware that Death is on your heels. You enjoy the poisoned mangoes of sensual indulgence. But, Death is breathing heavily down your neck.

When you are placed in this situation of tragic contradiction, what is the option open to you? In the first instance, are you aware that you have an option open? Yes, there is an option. Given this situation what you must do is to garner merit. With dexterity you must start gathering merit, without stopping. This is the only hope you have.



Head aflame

If one's head is aflame, his only preoccupation is to put it out. In the same way one has to be aware of the need to acquire merit. It is the only way to get rid of the suffering that does not leave human life.



HEAD AFLAME

Isa	gini gattaku e gini nivana	lesa
kusa	-laṭa mañdakut pamā nuvot	misa
me sa	-sara athära noyana me duk	räsa
vesa	-sin näta atharinā	upadesa

Like one whose head is aflame will extinguish that flame, if one is not even a little heedful in regard to the wholesome, there indeed is no admonition to abandon this mass of suffering that does not leave this life-process.

Commentary

Imagine an individual who has a whole series of problems to worry about. His mind may be troubled about his children, his wealth, his profession. But while he is worrying about all this suddenly he finds that his head is aflame.

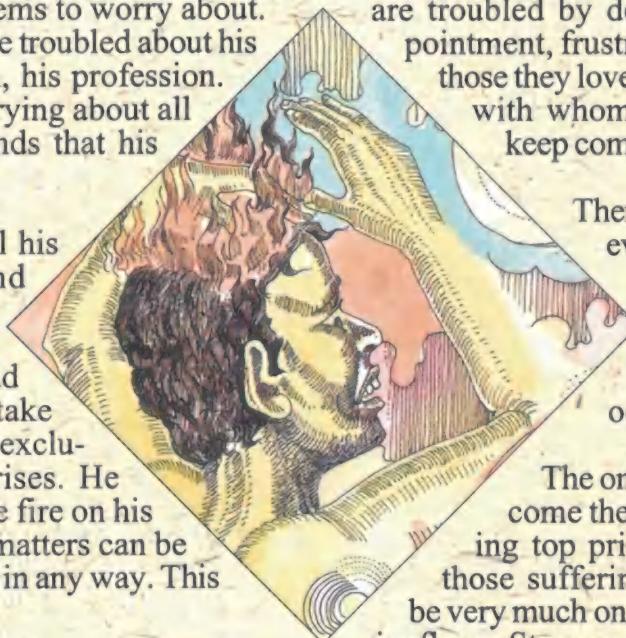
He will overlook all his other problems and will think only of putting out the fire on his head. His head that is aflame will take top priority - to the exclusion of all other crises. He must first put out the fire on his head. All the other matters can be delayed. But not this in any way. This just cannot wait.

Ordinary worldlings, too, are in this very same predicament. They have hundreds of troubles to worry about. But, they are all

aflame with the fire of recurrent births. They are troubled by decay, sickness, disappointment, frustration, separation from those they love, association with those with whom one does not like to keep company.

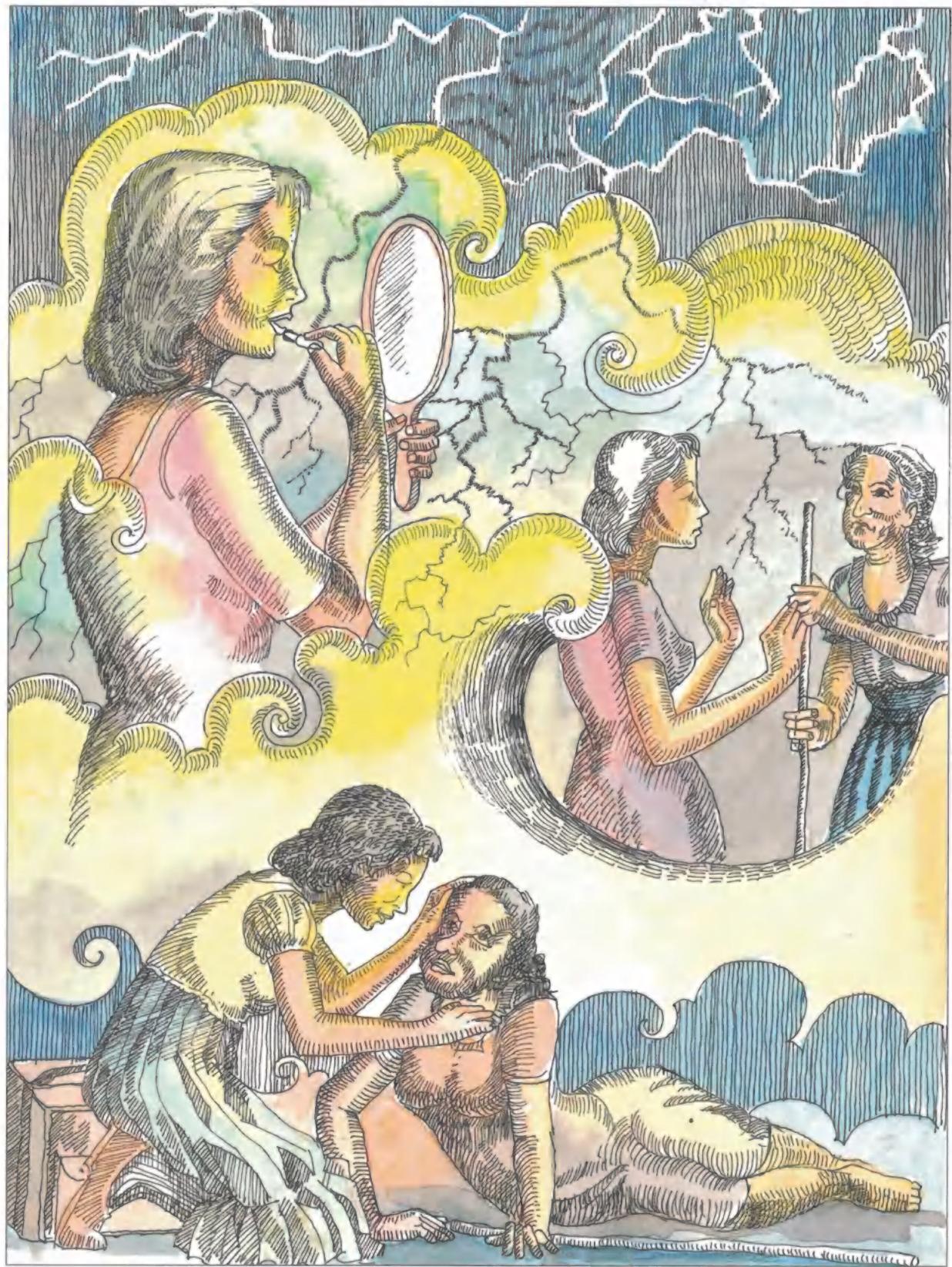
Therefore, you have to stop everything and douse this fire of suffering. These sufferings never leave a person who is caught up in the ocean of existence.

The only way you could overcome these sufferings is by giving top priority to the ending of those sufferings. Consider these to be very much on a par with the head that is aflame. Stop everything and concentrate on accumulating merit. It is the only way you can ensure that the sufferings of the cycle of existence are eradicated.



Body decays

This body tends to decay. Do not think of it as permanent or as mine. It is as impermanent as a lightning flash. Take care not to use this body for acts of sin. Do good with effort and without delay.



BODY DECAYS

Tirava	nosiṭa kuṇu kaya-me	taṁāyē
notira	bavaṭa viduliya	upamāyē
nitara	me kaya pavakaṭa	nonamāyē
karava	kusal vīriya	nopāmayē

Without thinking of this putrid body as being permanent and oneself, for its impermanence is comparable to that of lightning, one should constantly avoid turning this body toward demerit; instead perform the wholesome with effort and without delay

Commentary

The human body is subject to decay. It ages. Youth passes away. Wrinkles mar the skin. Body becomes bent and decrepit. Steps become slow. Aches and pains become frequent. Eye-sight weakens. Hearing becomes hard. This way, the whole body is a repository of ills.

But, we are all deluded that the body is permanent. We go about with no regard whatsoever for the process of decay that is tightening its grasp on us each moment. Never get into the frame of mind in which you tend to persuade yourself that this body of mine is permanent. Our body exists only for a fleeting moment. This impermanence is like a fleeting flash of lightning. It never lasts. It disappears instantly.

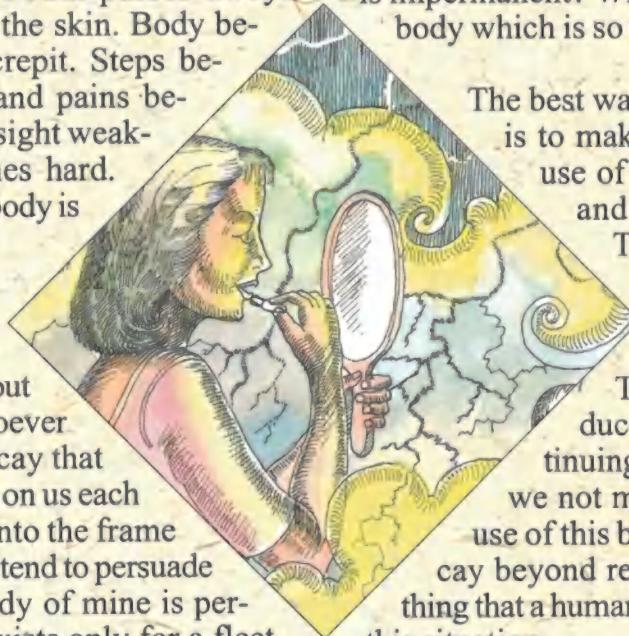
People are confronted with a troubling di-

lemma. What do we do with this body which is impermanent? What do we do with this body which is so full of impurities?

The best way out of this dilemma is to make the fullest possible use of this fleeting moment and the decaying body.

This moment is quite rare. Why should one waste away such a precious moment? This body, too, gets reduced to decay as a continuing process. Why should we not make the best possible use of this body that will soon decay beyond repair? This is just one thing that a human being could do, given this situation.

You must turn these disadvantages into assets. Acquire merit unceasingly. That is the surest insurance against body's impermanence and decay.



Get target in a flash

In the dark, one has to shoot an arrow at a horse-hair that is at a distance. This has to be done in the light provided by a flash of lightning.

If you miss the flash you miss the target.

Similarly this body is the flash using which you have to achieve merit.

If you miss, you lose both heaven and nibbana.



GET TARGET IN A FLASH

Andu	-rehi as loma vidinata
vidu	-liya pähä väraduña hot
vidu	-liya van me kaya lat
sidu	nokalot matu sagamok

durädi
varadī
tänadī
varadī

One shooting a horse-hair from a distance (in the dark) will miss it if one were to miss the brightness of lightning, (similarly) when one has begotten this lightning-like body and does not perform (the wholesome), one will miss future heaven and release.

Commentary

An expert in archery performs a rare feat. He sets up a fine strand of a horse's body-hair as his target. The time he selects to perform his feat is a dark night.

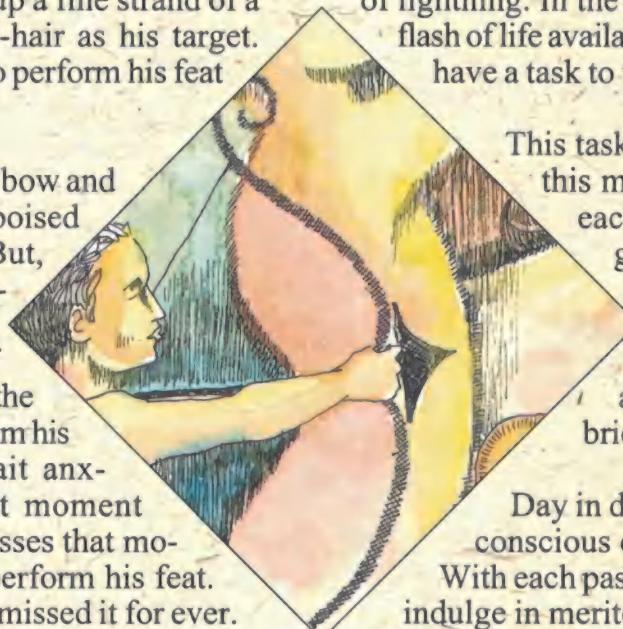
In the dark night, his bow and arrows ready, he is poised to get at his target. But, he can shoot his arrow in the light provided by a flash of lightning. He awaits the flash of lightning to aim his arrow. He must wait anxiously till the right moment comes. But, if he misses that moment he can never perform his feat. He would then have missed it for ever.

Human life, too, is like a flash of lightning. In a trice it is over. A being is born, grows up, and in a brief while the life is gone.

The archer has a feat to perform in the flash of lightning. In the same way, in the brief flash of life available to humans they, too, have a task to fulfil.

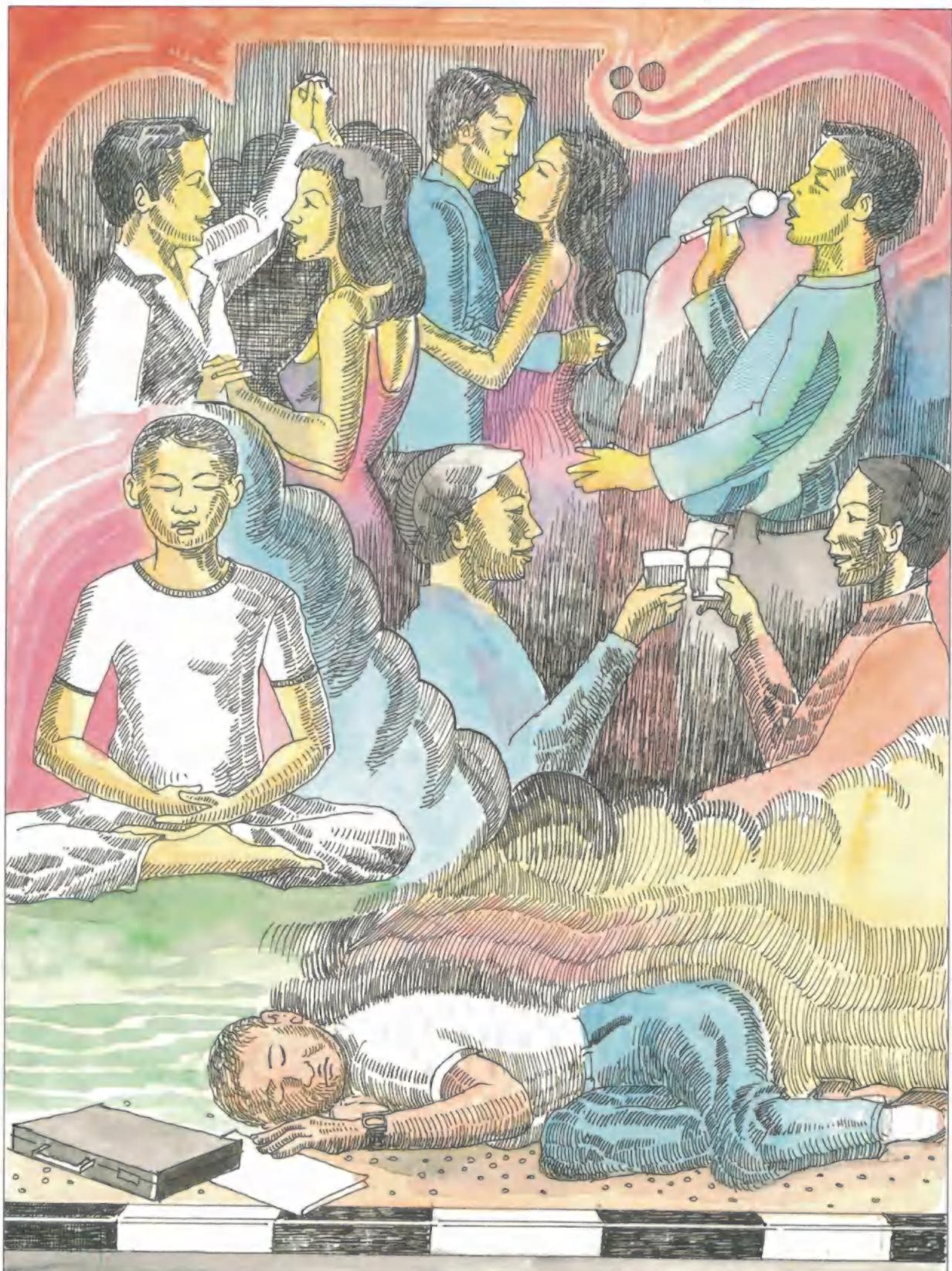
This task is to make the best of this moment of life given to each human person. The greatest achievement possible with this momentary life is to acquire all the merit a person can, during this brief life-time.

Day in day out, people must be conscious of the passage of time. With each passing moment one must indulge in meritorious activities with a sense of urgency and unflagging alertness. If this moment of life is missed, beings lose their opportunity to achieve Liberation and birth in pleasant states.



Why play and jest

There is no place where Death can be stopped. The luxury and comfort you enjoy, last only until your merit lasts. Without faith in the teaching of Buddha, that can eradicate suffering, what is the use of dancing, playing and jesting?.



WHY PLAY AND JEST?

Kotana	vuvat näta maru hata	bādā
vindina	me säpa pin ätitek	vēdā
gevana	sasara duk budu baña	nādā
kumana	näatum kelî kavata	sinādā

Death has no obstruction anywhere. This prosperity is enjoyed only as long as one has merit. Without trusting the Buddha's preaching that eradicates the suffering in this life-process, what is the purpose of this dancing, playing, jesting, laughing, etc.?

Commentary

No human being can escape the grip of Death. Frightened by the thought of Death, a human being tries to escape its grasp. But, there is no nook or corner that Death cannot reach. Death has no obstacle. Death can achieve whatever it wants to achieve.

The power Death has to reach out to any being and grip him can never be overturned by any being. Wherever a person may hide, there is no escape from Death. The Enlightened One has stated this in the following Stanzā:

“Na antalikkhe na samudda majjhe
Na pabbatānam vivaram pavissa
Na vijjati so jagatippadeso
Yatthaṭṭhito nappasahetha maccu.”

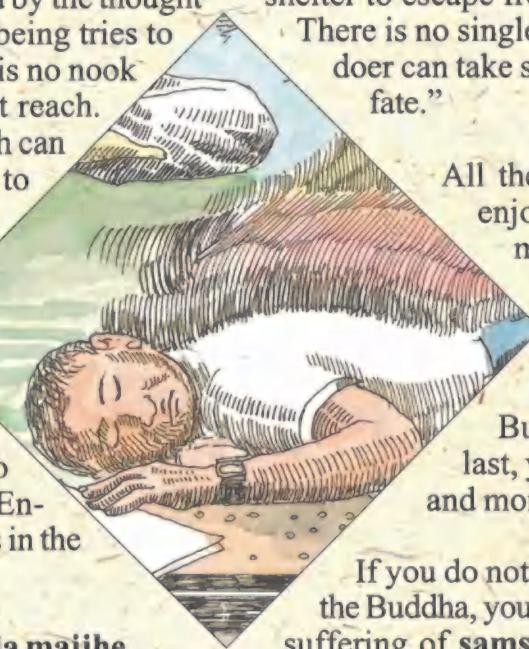
“Neither in sky nor in the midst of the ocean,

nor in a mountain-cave can an evil-doer take shelter to escape from one's evil kamma.

There is no single spot on earth an evil-doer can take shelter in, to escape his fate.”

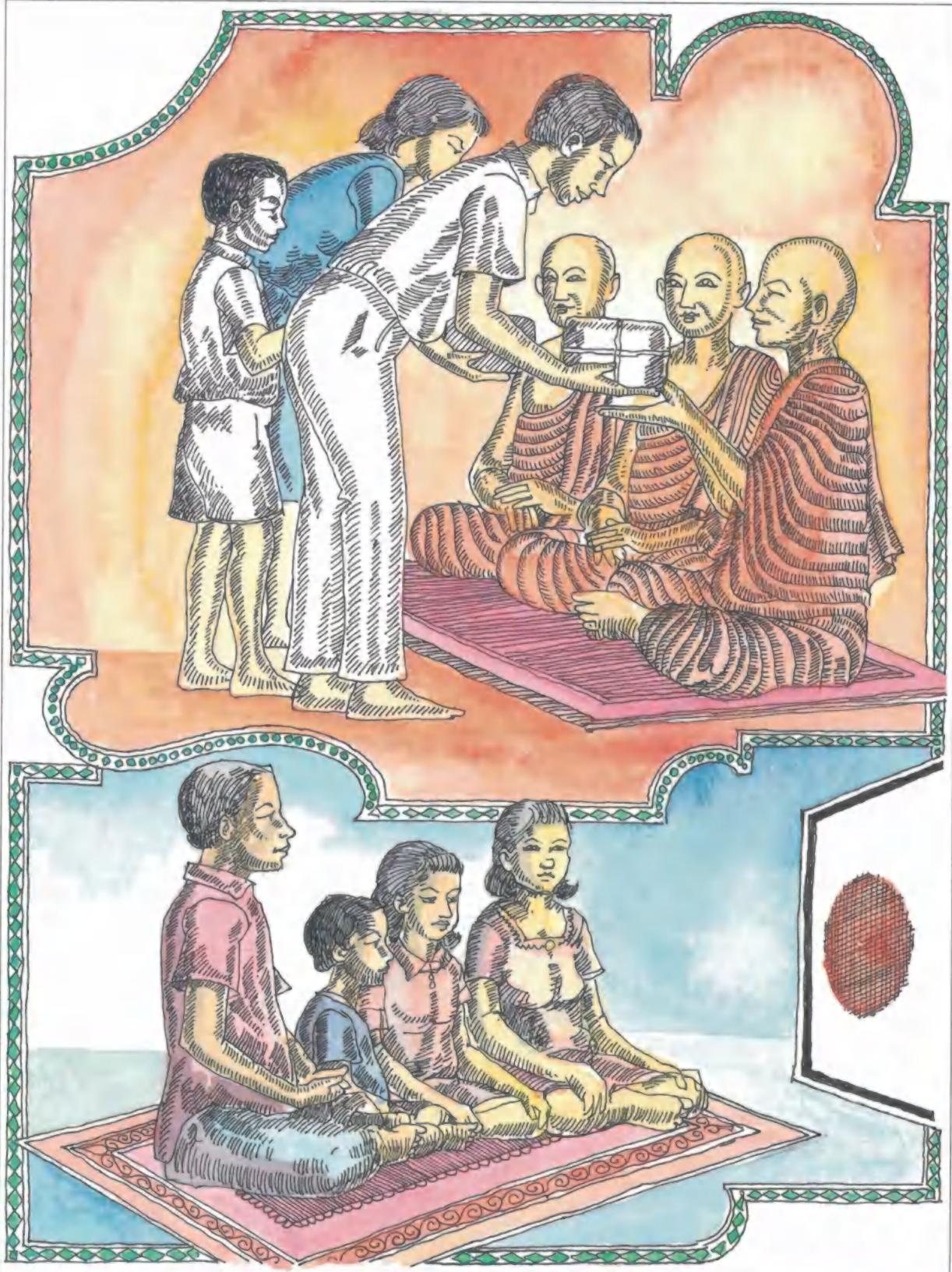
All the comforts the beings enjoy last only until their merit is exhausted. Once your accumulation of merit is spent, all the pleasures you enjoyed will be gone. But, to make your merits last, you must acquire more and more merits.

If you do not heed the Teachings of the Buddha, you can never eradicate the suffering of *samsāra* - the cycle of existence. Without paying due attention to the centrally important matter of placing your faith in what the Buddha said, why do you dance, play, jest and laugh away your opportunities.?



An hour is a thousand years

For those faithful ones, who dislike the suffering of becoming, this is the only auspicious time. If people are constantly aware of the good qualities of generosity and discipline, an hour will be like a thousand years.



AN HOUR IS A THOUSAND YEARS

Sädähät -tanhaṭa bava duk nokämati
 yahapat kal mē kal misa vena näti
 danitot dansil guṇa sata nonävati
 päyakut avurudu dahasak vitaräti

There exists no auspicious time than this for the faithful ones who dislike the suffering of becoming. If beings are constantly aware of the good qualities such as generosity and virtue, an hour would be like a thousand years.

Commentary

For those who are full of faith, this is the most opportune time. For those devoted beings who dislike the suffering in the cycle of existence, this is the best of times. They have no other opportunity.

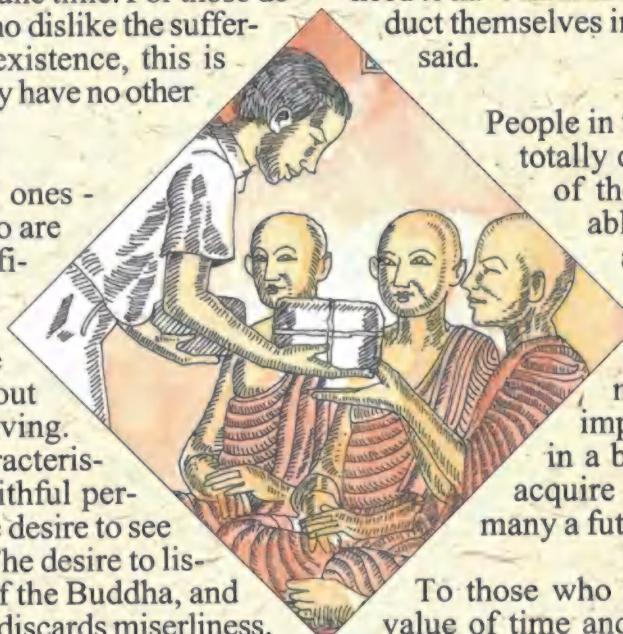
Who are the faithful ones - the devoted ones who are full of **saddhā** - confidence? A faithful devotee is a person who believes in the Three Refuges, without even a trace of misgiving. There are three characteristics of a devoted, faithful person. They are: 1) The desire to see virtuous people; 2) The desire to listen to the Doctrine of the Buddha, and 3) Generosity which discards miserliness.

This is the best opportunity for them primarily because they have been able to be born as human beings. Besides, this is a time when the Word of the Buddha is still preva-

lent. In addition, they are fully aware of the need to have faith in the Buddha, and to conduct themselves in terms of what He has said.

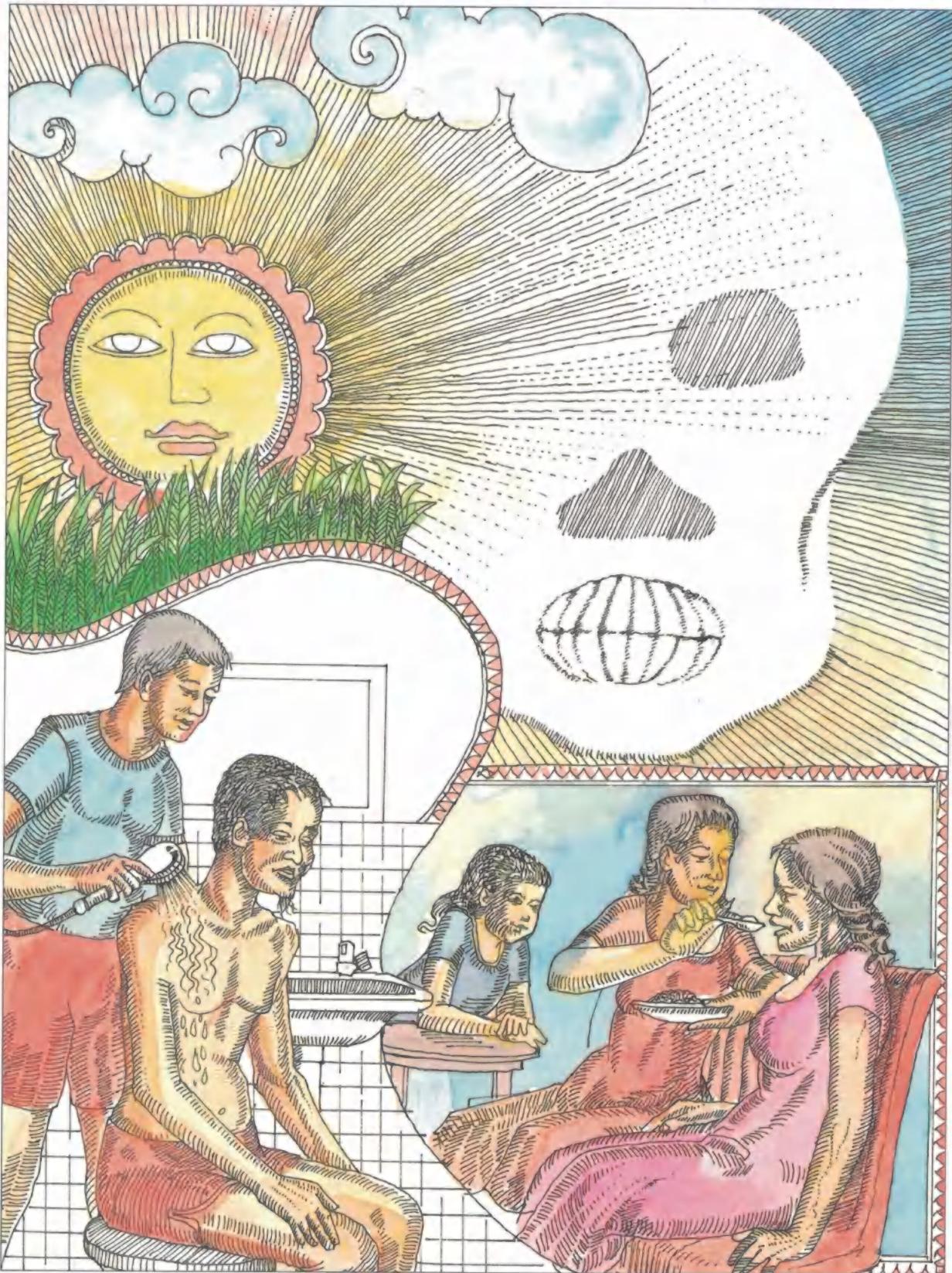
People in that frame of mind are totally conscious of the value of the life they have been able to obtain. When they are aware of the value of generosity and the righteous way of life, each passing moment is of tremendous importance because even in a brief moment they can acquire merit that will last for many a future birth to come.

To those who are thus aware of the value of time and the opportunity they have, even a mere hour is very much like a thousand years. They can garner a vast amount of merit even in the briefest moment as they are already persuaded of the efficacy of good kamma.



Death comes

Death might come even today. Acquire merit. How can one be sure that Death will not come tomorrow ? When can man protect himself against Death ?
Why are you lazy to do good ?



DEATH COMES

Ada ada	eyi maru pin kāra	gannē
kelesada	seta maru neti	sitannē
kikalada	mahasen maru	äpavannē
kumaṭada	kusalaṭa kammäli	vannē

Soon death will come. Let one perform merit. How can one think that death would not come tomorrow? When can there be a guarantee against death with its great army? Why languish about the wholesome?

Commentary

There is no one who can be certain about the moment of Death. Who can be sure about the time Death will call? For all we know, Death may occur today itself. If you are a reasonable, realistic person, you will be conscious of the fact that Death could strike any time without any prior notice. If it is possible for Death to come today, how can one be sure that Death will not come tomorrow?

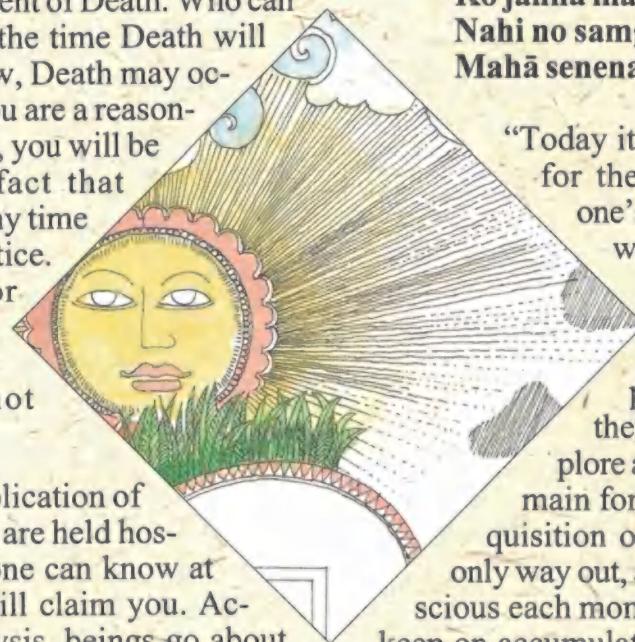
The inescapable implication of all this is that beings are held hostage by Death. No one can know at what point Death will claim you. According to this analysis, beings go about with the perpetual threat of Death hanging over their head.

The Buddha has stated it in this way:

“Ajjeva kiccam ātappam
Ko jaññā maranam suve
Nahi no samgaram tena
Mahā senena maccunā.”

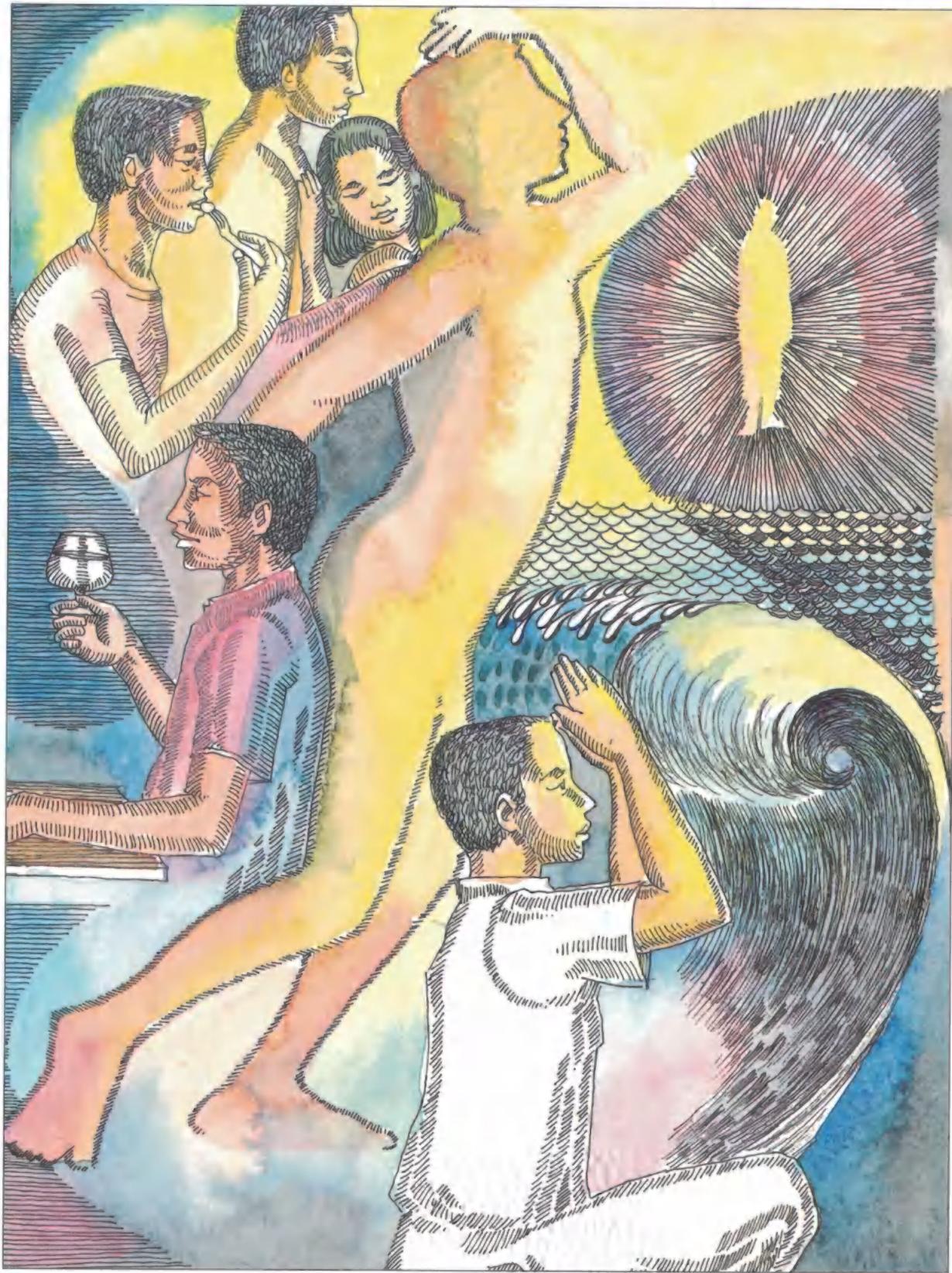
“Today itself one should strive for the accomplishment of one's tasks; for, who knows whether Death would strike tomorrow.”

When beings are placed in this situation they must ceaselessly explore avenues of escape. The main form of escape is the acquisition of merit. If that is the only way out, all beings must be conscious each moment about the need to keep on accumulating merit. They must not relax their effort, even for a moment. They must never be lazy in the matter of acquiring merits, which will ensure the eradication of the threat of Death.



Cross samsāra

Why do you eat, drink and deck yourself constantly ? Where do you take this body ? Acquire merit without delay.
Only that will ferry you across the ocean of Becoming.



CROSS SAMSĀRA

Kumātada	kābī niti	sārasennē
kotanäda	mē kaya äragena	yannē
ämasanda	nomäliva pin kara	gannē
emavda	bava sayuren goda	lannē

Why constantly eat, drink and decorate oneself? Where does one go with this body? Always, without languishing, perform merit. This indeed will ferry one across the ocean of becoming.

Commentary

All human beings follow a certain routine. They must invariably acquire nourishment to keep themselves going. To sustain life they must eat and drink. They cannot eat and drink only one day. They must constantly take food.

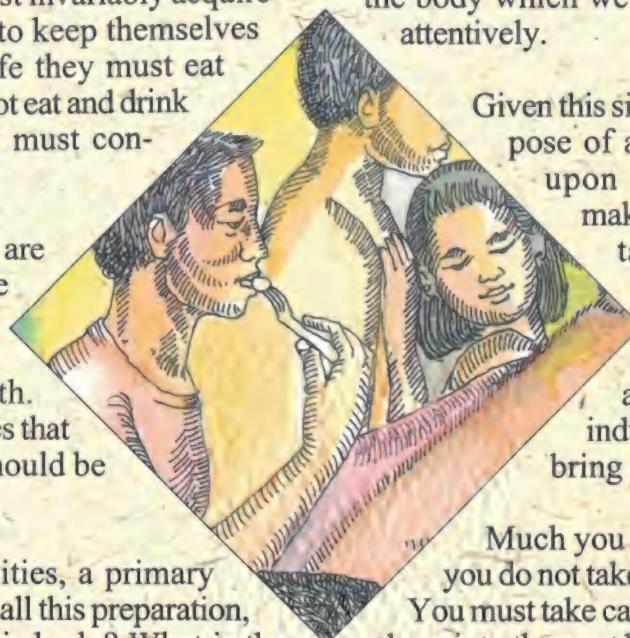
Food and drink alone are not sufficient. The body should be kept in proper trim. One must take one's bath. One must wear clothes that are befitting. Hair should be dressed suitably.

After all these activities, a primary question arises. With all this preparation, where do we take this body? What is the purpose of all this "decking"? The answer is simple. We are not taking this body anywhere, though we take care of it meticu-

lously. When we pass away we leave behind the body which we have taken care of so attentively.

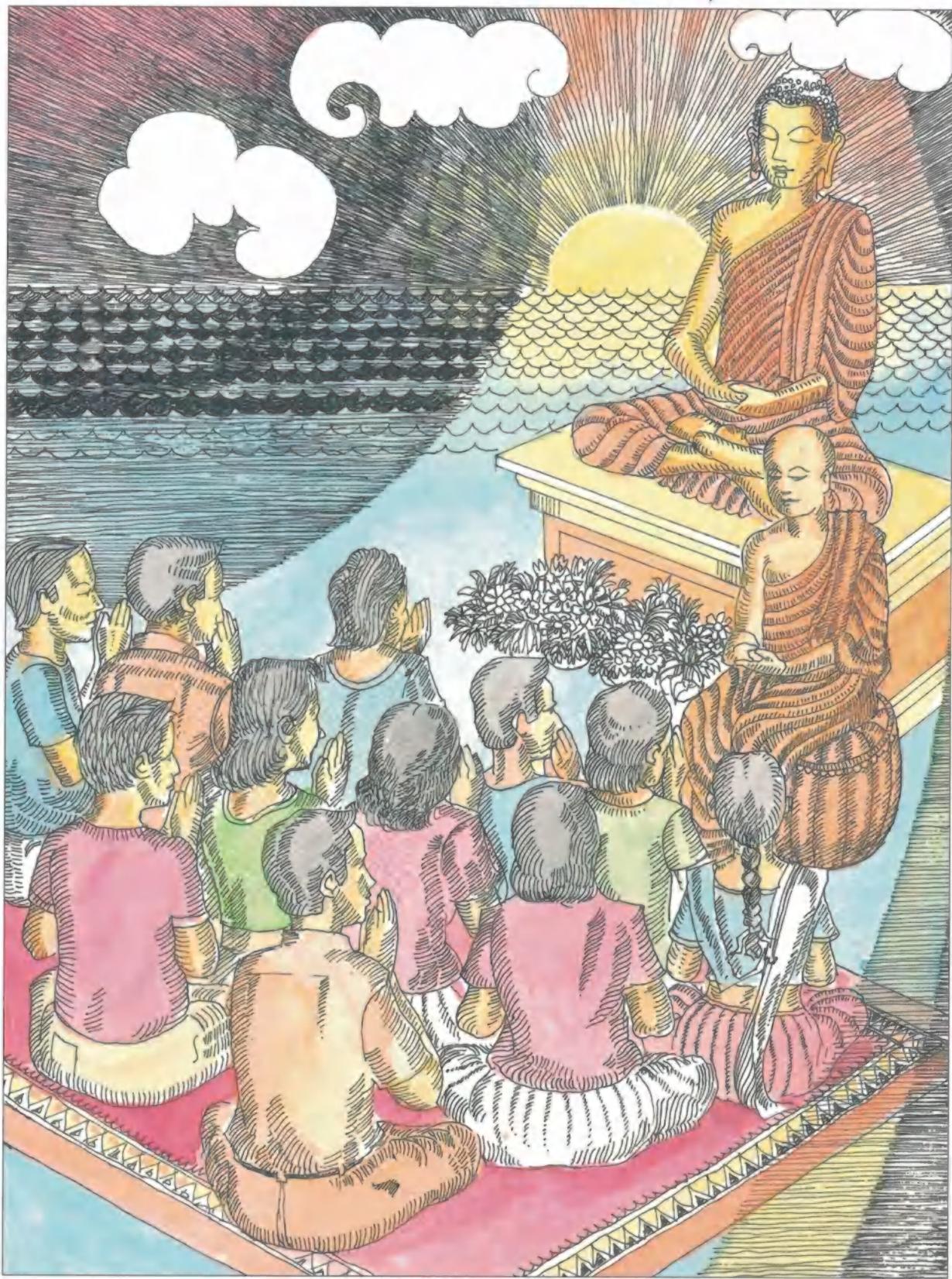
Given this situation, what is the purpose of all this care we lavish upon the body? We must make some arrangement to take good things into our next life. For that, we must never slacken our effort to acquire merit. Always indulge in actions that will bring merit to us.

Much you may trim the body but you do not take it along when you die! You must take care of what you will take along into the next birth - that is your good action. It is only this good kamma that will help you to have a profitable existence, as you traverse the ocean of existence.



Listen to Dhamma

Don't delay. Cross the ocean of Becoming. Determined to obtain the bliss of Nibbana, refrain from sin. Listen constantly to the Teachings of the Buddha. Don't relax. Keep on trying. Acquire merit.



LISTEN TO DHAMMA

Tarava	sasara sayuren topa	nolasā
tirava	labana mok sirisäpa	sakasā
torava	pavin nitorama muni	baṇasā
karava	kusal vīriya pasu	nobäsā

You should, without languishing, cross over the ocean of the life-process. For the sake of assuredly attaining the excellent happiness of release, always refrain from demerit and with effort, without retreating, cultivate the wholesome by listening to the preaching of the Sage.

Commentary

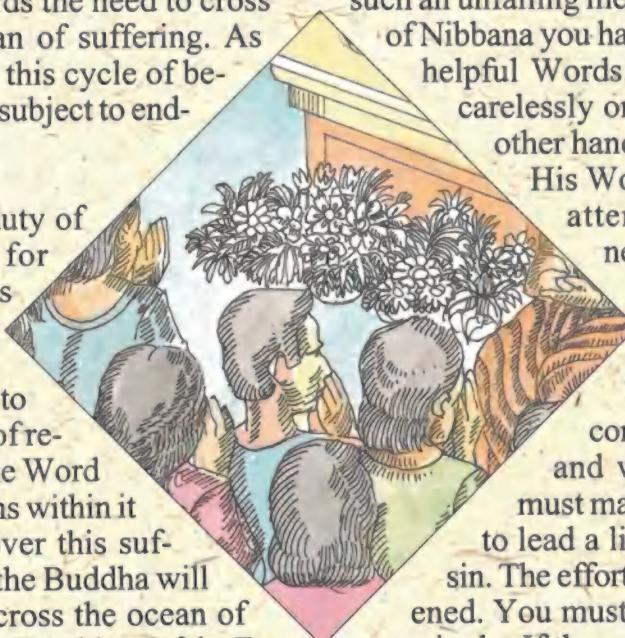
The total effort of beings should be directed towards the need to cross over this ocean of suffering. As long as you linger in this cycle of becoming, you become subject to endless suffering.

Therefore, it is the duty of all beings to look for eternal bliss that is well beyond this suffering. Most beings do not have guidance to overcome this cycle of recurring births. But, the Word of the Buddha contains within it the formula to get over this suffering. The Word of the Buddha will certainly take you across the ocean of suffering. Besides, the Teachings of the Enlightened One will ensure beings the hoped-for goal - Nibbana - the Eternal Bliss.

When the Enlightened One has provided such an unfailing method to reach the Bliss of Nibbana you have only to listen to His helpful Words. You must not listen carelessly or routinely but, on the other hand, you have to listen to His Word, paying it the keen attention it so pre-eminently deserves.

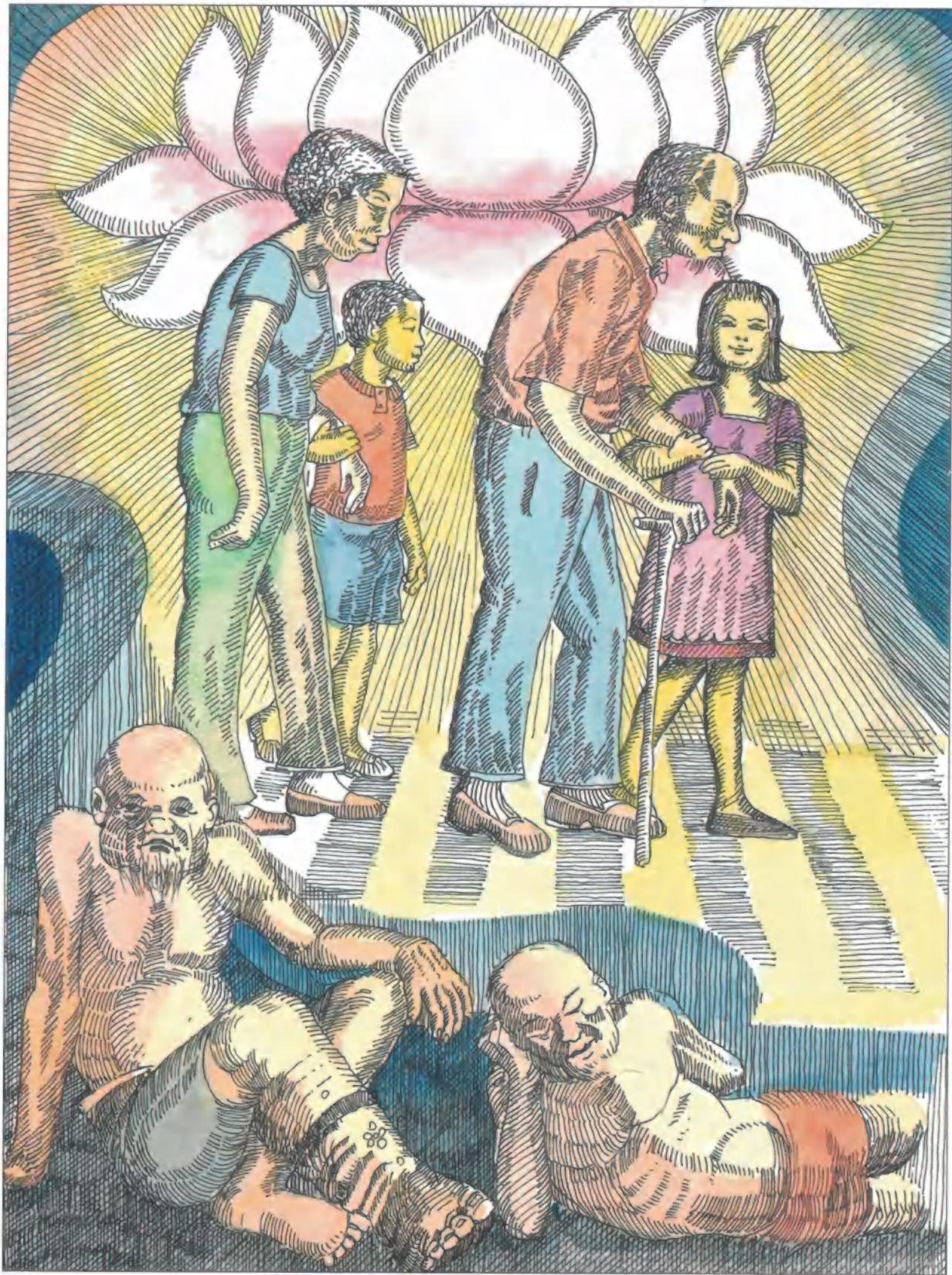
Listening by itself is not good enough.

You have to live according to what you heard and what you learnt. You must make a determined effort to lead a life of virtue, shunning sin. The effort should never be slackened. You must strive constantly, unceasingly. If there are moments of sloth, one must take note of those and continue to strive with diligence.



Listen to good advice

Your mind must always be bent on merit. Only that will open the path to Nibbana. Why don't you listen to words spoken with the intention of doing you good. You will see your error only when you are in woeful states.



HEED GOOD ADVICE

Hämaviṭa pīṭa ma sita
nīvaṇaṭa maga emavada
vāḍakaṭa kī bas kima
nīrayaṭa van kaladō topa

pādannē
sādannē
nādannē
dannē

Always guide your thought in the direction of merit itself. Is it not what prepares the way to freedom? Why not believe in the words intended for progress? Would you realize it only when you have fallen into hell?

Commentary

The mind is difficult to be tamed. It wanders forth as it wishes. It is incredibly fast. It is bodiless. Because of these characteristics it is extremely difficult to direct it to a given goal. Bringing about one-pointedness of mind is an ordeal.

But, if you are keen to achieve Liberation, you will have to understand your mind and direct it always towards the virtuous. Clear up your cluttered mind. With that clarity, turn it constantly towards such activities as will ensure Liberation.

It is only such a discipline that will provide the right path to Nibbana. The way to Liberation undoubtedly lies in this training of the mind. The path to Liberation has to be sought through a mind fully attuned to the accumulation of virtues. But, strangely

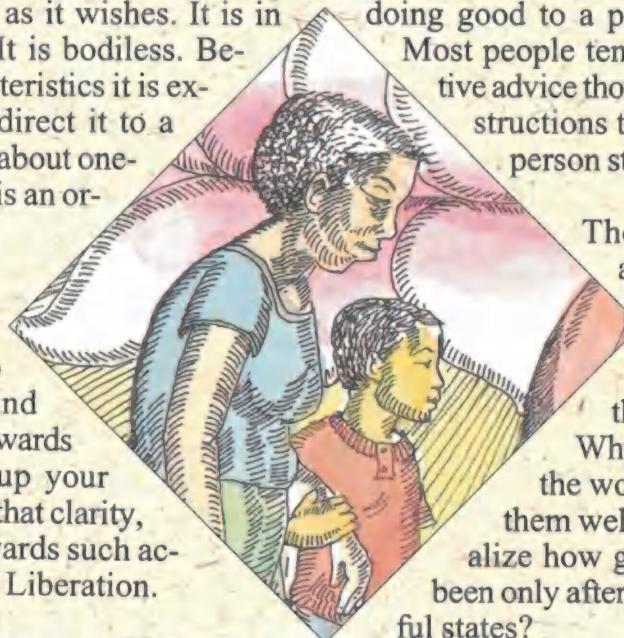
enough, words spoken with the intention of doing good to a person are not heeded.

Most people tend to neglect constructive advice though they may follow instructions that are likely to lead a person stray.

The question has to be asked, "Why is it that people show a tendency to neglect advice that is given with the best of intentions?"

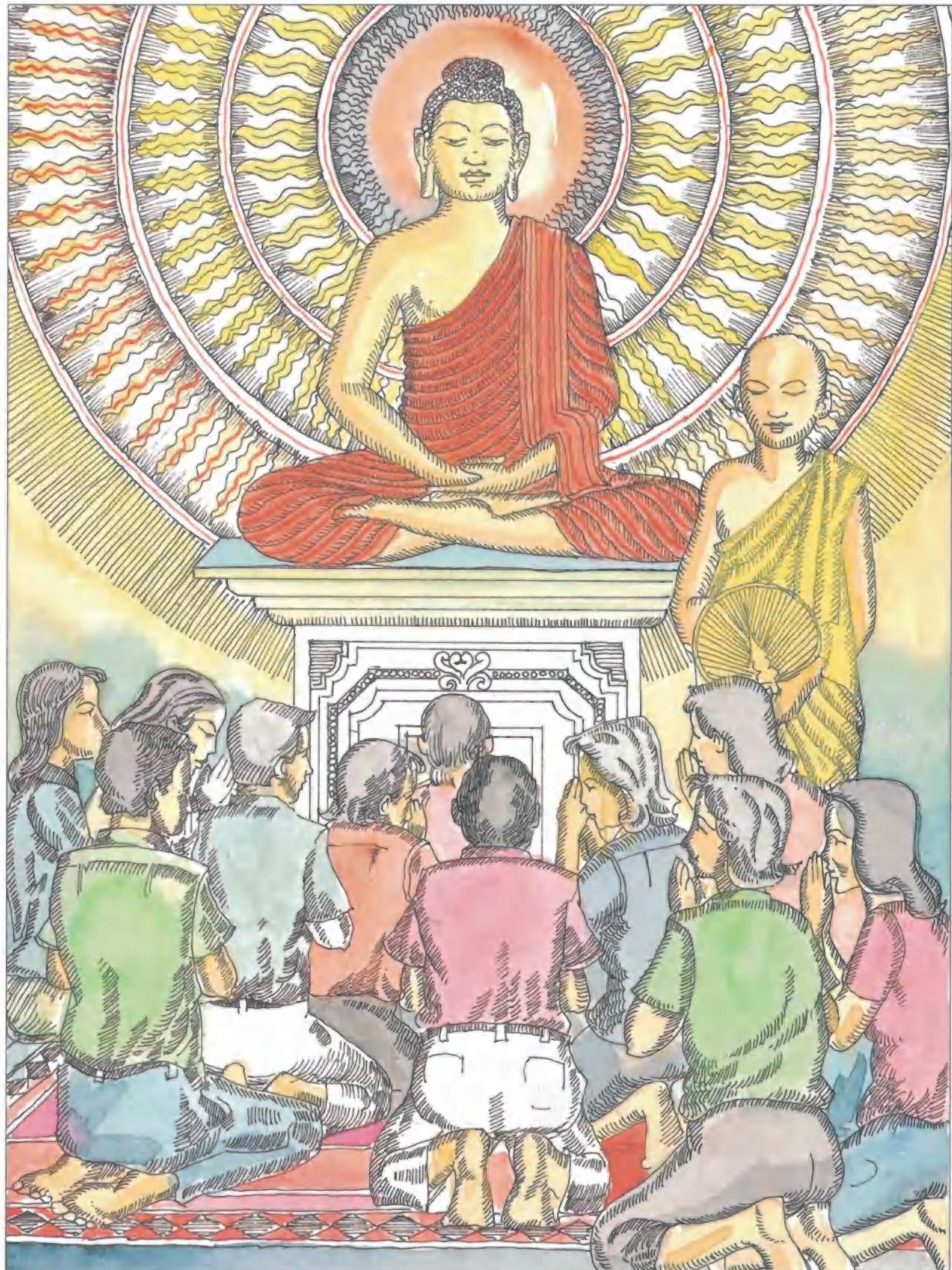
Why do people not believe the words of those who wish them well? Are you going to realize how grave your neglect has been only after you have entered woe-ful states?

Do not wait until it is too late. Listen to the good advice given you before you come to grief by discarding the profitable words you are provided with, well in time.



Buddha has appeared

Not even in a million years can you see the birth of a sage who gives you the glory of Nibbana. We have now got a time, when the Buddha has appeared. If you miss this time, you have no hope for the future world.



BUDDHA'S APPEARANCE

Mok siri dena munindungē
kap kela siya dahasakinut
pat vu e budugen yut me
et väraduña näta paralova

upataki
nolädäki
kaleki
pihiṭeki

The birth of the Great Sage who brings about the splendour of release is not obtained even after a hundred million aeons. This indeed is a time when such a Buddha is available. Missing it, there will be no support in a future world.

Commentary

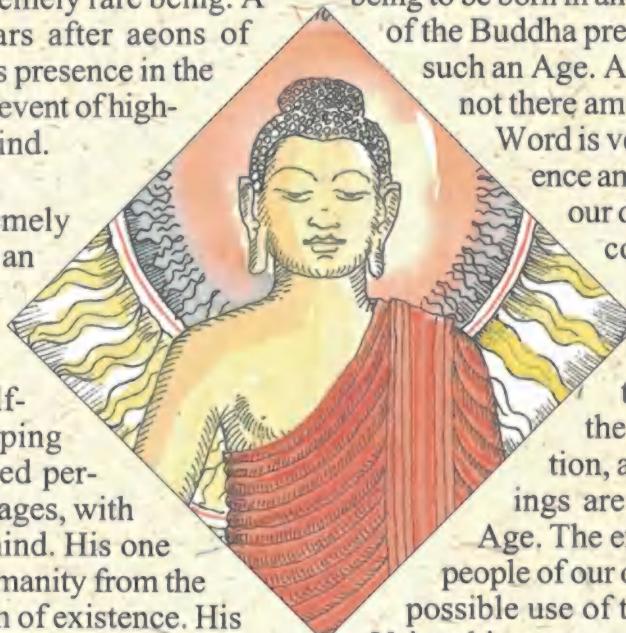
The Buddha - Supremely Enlightened One - is an extremely rare being. A Buddha appears after aeons of Buddha-less days. His presence in the world is, therefore, an event of highest blessing for mankind.

The Birth of a Supremely Enlightened Person is an event that takes place after countless ages. He appears among men with the sole, selfless intention of helping others. He has fulfilled perfections over endless ages, with just one purpose in mind. His one intention is to save humanity from the sufferings in the ocean of existence. His only goal is to liberate mankind and to gift them the glory of total Liberation.

Since the appearance of a Buddha is an exceedingly rare event in the world of humans,

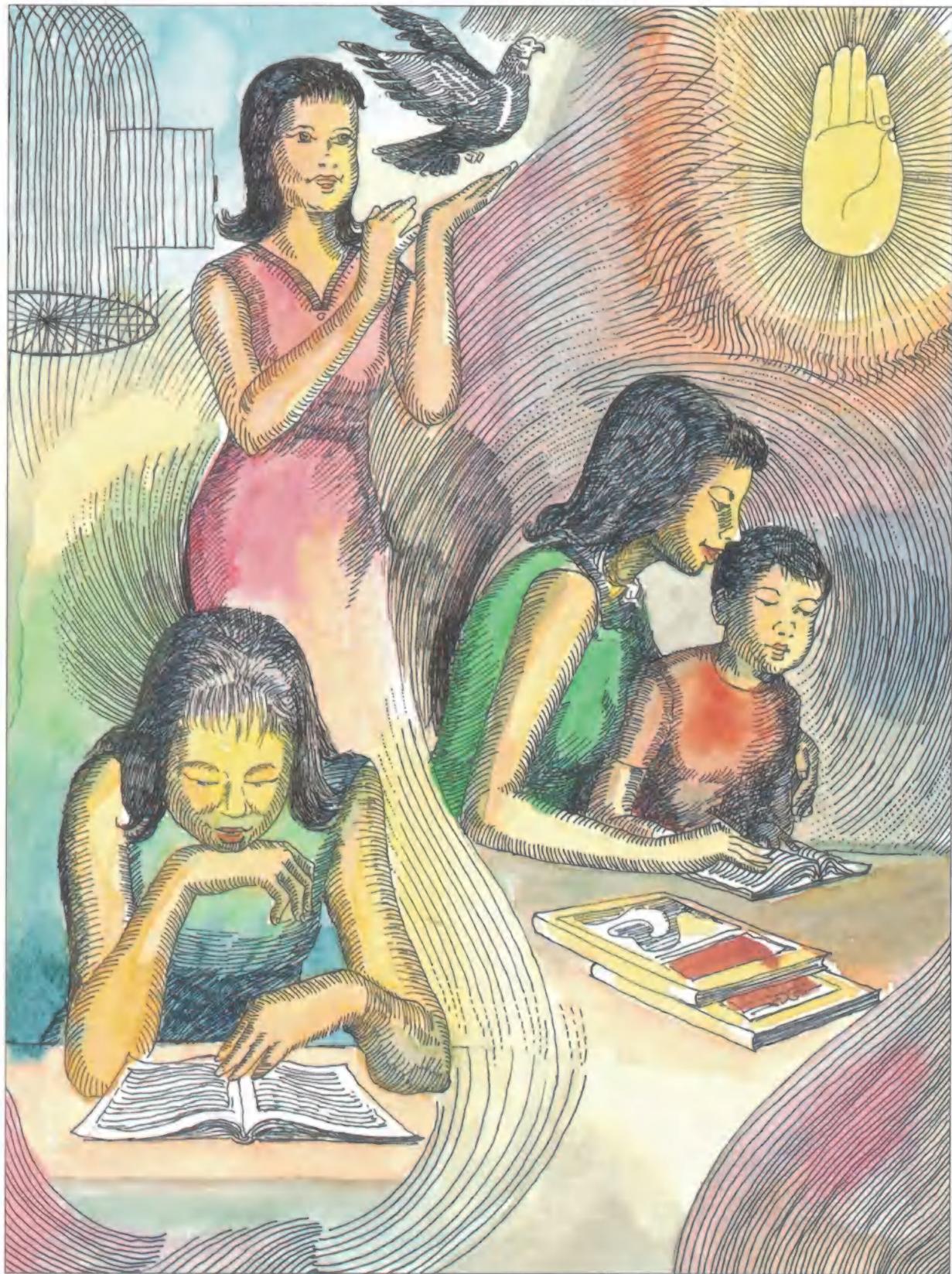
it is equally a rare opportunity for a human being to be born in an age in which the Word of the Buddha prevails. Today, we have such an Age. Although the Buddha is not there among us physically, His Word is very much a living presence among the human kind of our day. Therefore, our day could be considered a Buddha Age.

This way, today there is the presence of the Buddha's Dispensation, and today's human beings are present in a Buddha Age. The exceptionally fortunate people of our day must make the best possible use of this great opportunity. Using this rare combination, people must strive to amass as much merit as they can. If they miss this opportunity, these beings have no hope of well-being in the births to come.



Be friendly

Think of service to yourself and to others as the same. Be friendly to all. If you cannot do this, you will wander in the ocean of existence.
How can you achieve the bliss of the city of Nibbana?



BE FRIENDLY

At	-väda paraväda samava	sitannē	
met	sita sava	sita kerehi	karaññē
et	bäri nam	topa sasara	gevannē
set	pura säpa	kelesakada	labannē

Progress of oneself and progress of others should be considered equal. Thought of friendship should be extended to all living beings. If that is not possible, how will the life-process be spent? How could the happiness of the city of peace be obtained?

Commentary

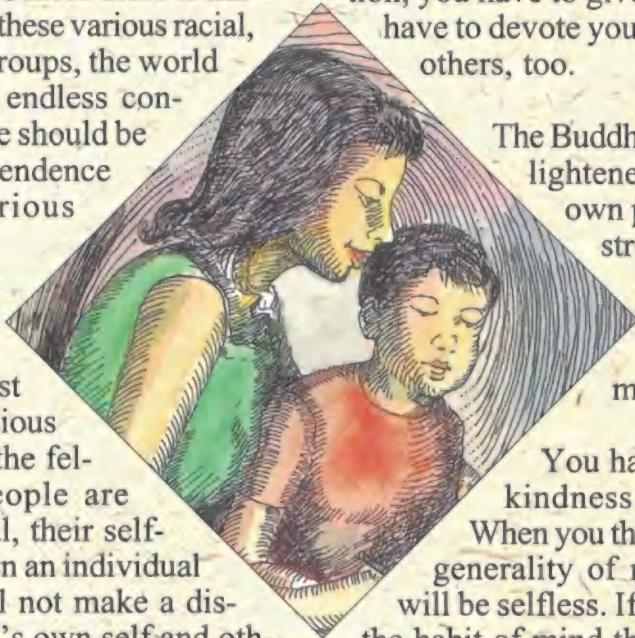
The world is made up of innumerable communities. Unless there is harmony between these various racial, national and ethnic groups, the world will be replete with endless conflicts. Therefore, there should be wholesome inter-dependence between these various groups.

In order to establish harmonious inter-relationships, one must always become conscious of the need to serve the fellow-man. When people are dedicated to this goal, their selfishness falls off. When an individual is not selfish, he will not make a distinction between one's own self and others. They will have the same attitude of mind towards one's own activities and the work done for the benefit of others. To an unselfish person "I" and "they" are both one.

Under normal circumstances, people emphasize their personal and selfish needs. They rate their work above that of others.

But, if one is really keen to achieve Liberation, you have to give up selfishness. You have to devote yourself to the service of others, too.

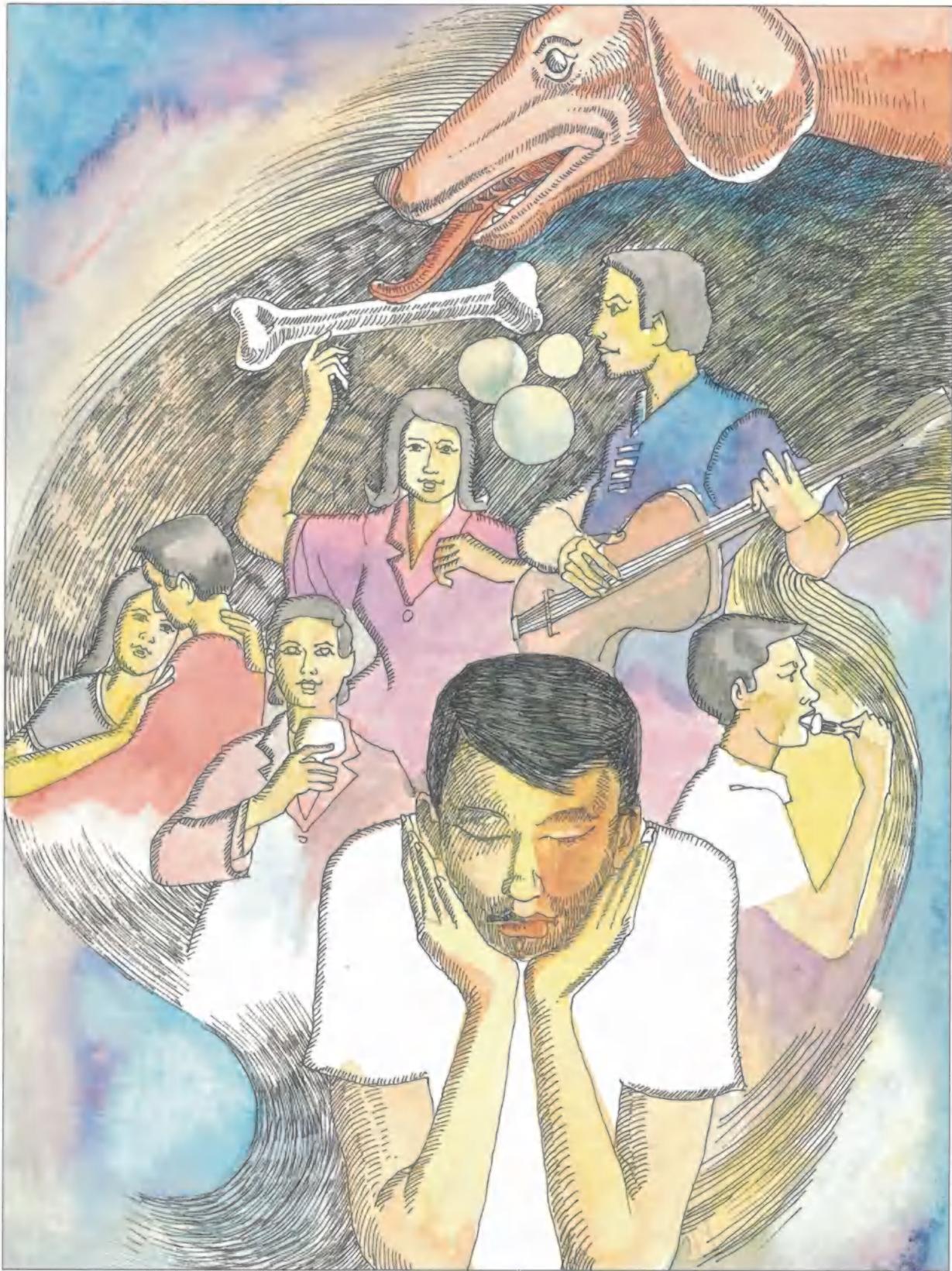
The Buddha - the Supremely Enlightened One - gave up His own personal comfort and strove to save humanity. His life-time on earth was spent totally for the benefit of all men.



You have to extend loving-kindness towards everyone. When you think that way about the generality of masses, your efforts will be selfless. If you cannot cultivate the habit of mind that enables you to be selfless, you will continue to be caught up in the wheel of existence. Once you are in the ocean of **samsara** you will undergo continuous, unceasing suffering. If you are suffering, how can you strive to earn merit or to lead a life of virtue? If you cannot accumulate merit, how can you reach the benefits of Liberation?

Dry bones of pleasure

A dog licks a dry-bone that has neither flesh nor blood. The dog does not get any satisfaction. It is the same with sensual pleasures. They do not give any satisfaction; though one may not see it they bring only suffering.



DRY BONES OF PLEASURE

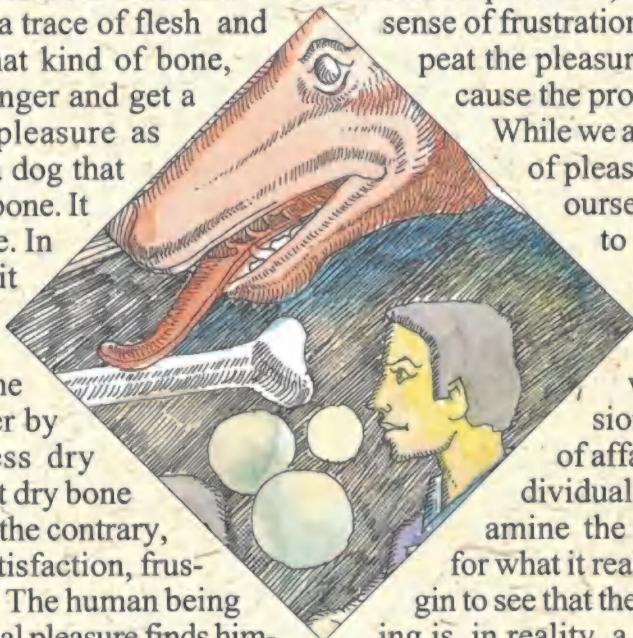
Mas	le näti äta balu	levakannē
kus	pirumak palayak	nolabannē
les	ē säpatehi säpa	nositannē
dos	nopenenu misa duk mayi	vannē

A dog licks a bone without flesh or blood and obtains neither the filling of its stomach nor any (other) result. Similarly, one should not look for happiness in pleasures of sense. Even though their blemish is not perceptible, only suffering results.

Commentary

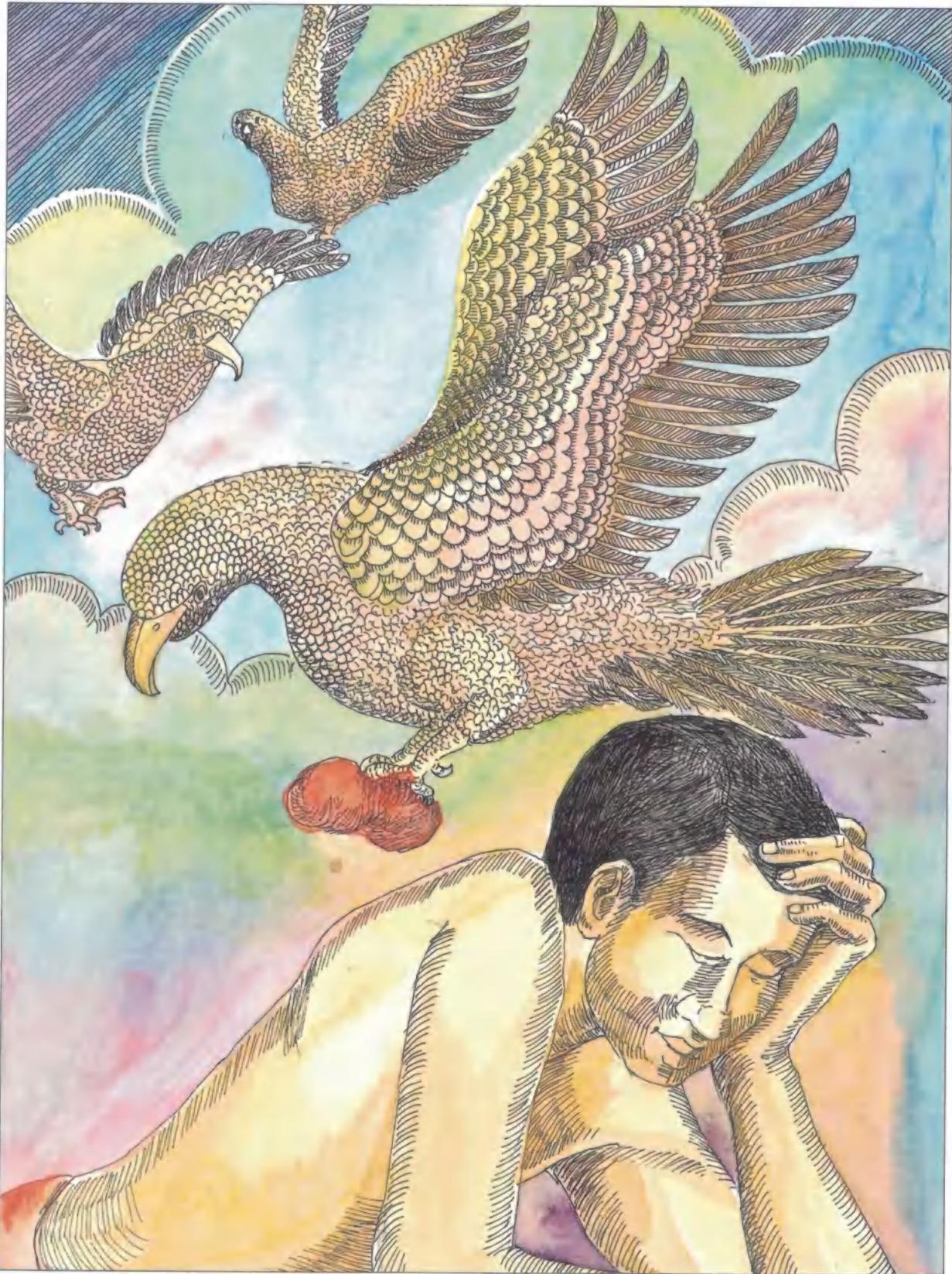
Dogs take delight in bones. But the bones they prefer are those that have at least a trace of flesh and blood. By licking that kind of bone, dogs satisfy their hunger and get a certain amount of pleasure as well. But, consider a dog that has been given a dry bone. It may lick the dry bone. In spite of the fact that it is a bone, the dog does not derive any pleasure. Nor can the dog satisfy its hunger by licking that fleshless dry bone. To the dog, that dry bone is of no use at all. On the contrary, it gives the dog dissatisfaction, frustration and suffering. The human being who indulges in sensual pleasure finds himself in the same situation as the dog licking

the fleshless dry bone. Out of his indulgence in sensual pleasures, he receives only a deep sense of frustration. He is tempted to repeat the pleasures over and over, because the process is not satisfying. While we are engaged in this kind of pleasure we cannot see for ourselves the harm it does to us. The harmful results of that kind of indulgence can be viewed only when we are free of delusion. Once the true state of affairs dawns upon an individual, he will be able to examine the so-called "pleasure" for what it really is. Then he will begin to see that the pleasure he was chasing is, in reality, a source of sorrow and suffering.



Hawk with lump of flesh

A hawk flies with a lump of flesh in its talons. It will be attacked by other hawks if it does not drop that lump of meat. If one is greedy about enjoying the five fold pleasures, they will suffer from twenty-five forms of fears.



HAWK WITH LUMP OF FLESH

Mas kätiyak gat ukusaku
 mas nodämuva ukusangen
 pas kam rasa loba kalahot
 pas visi maha bayakin duk

ahasē
 vänasē
 emäsē
 sälasē

A hawk in the sky holding a chunk of flesh will come to destruction by other hawks if it were not to let it go. Similarly, if one were to be greedy about the enjoyment of the five-fold pleasures, suffering will result from twenty-five types of great fears.

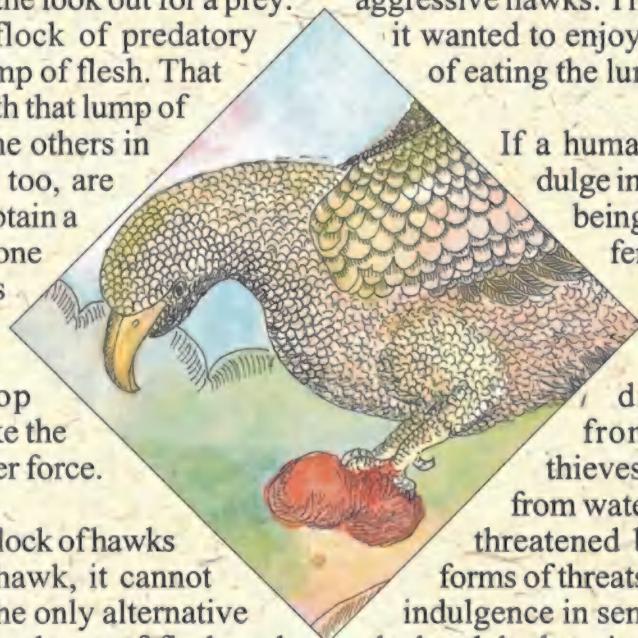
Commentary

With their keen eye, the hawks are always on the look out for a prey. Out of a flock of predatory hawks, one gets a lump of flesh. That hawk starts flying with that lump of flesh in its talons. The others in that flock of hawks, too, are watching keenly to obtain a prey. When they see one of their fellow-hawks with a lump of flesh in its talons, those other hawks swoop upon that hawk to take the lump of flesh, by sheer force.

When such a vicious flock of hawks falls upon that one hawk, it cannot survive the attack. The only alternative it has is to release the lump of flesh and save itself. The hawk with the lump of flesh

had to suffer the attack of a whole flock of aggressive hawks. This was solely because it wanted to enjoy the sensual pleasure of eating the lump of flesh.

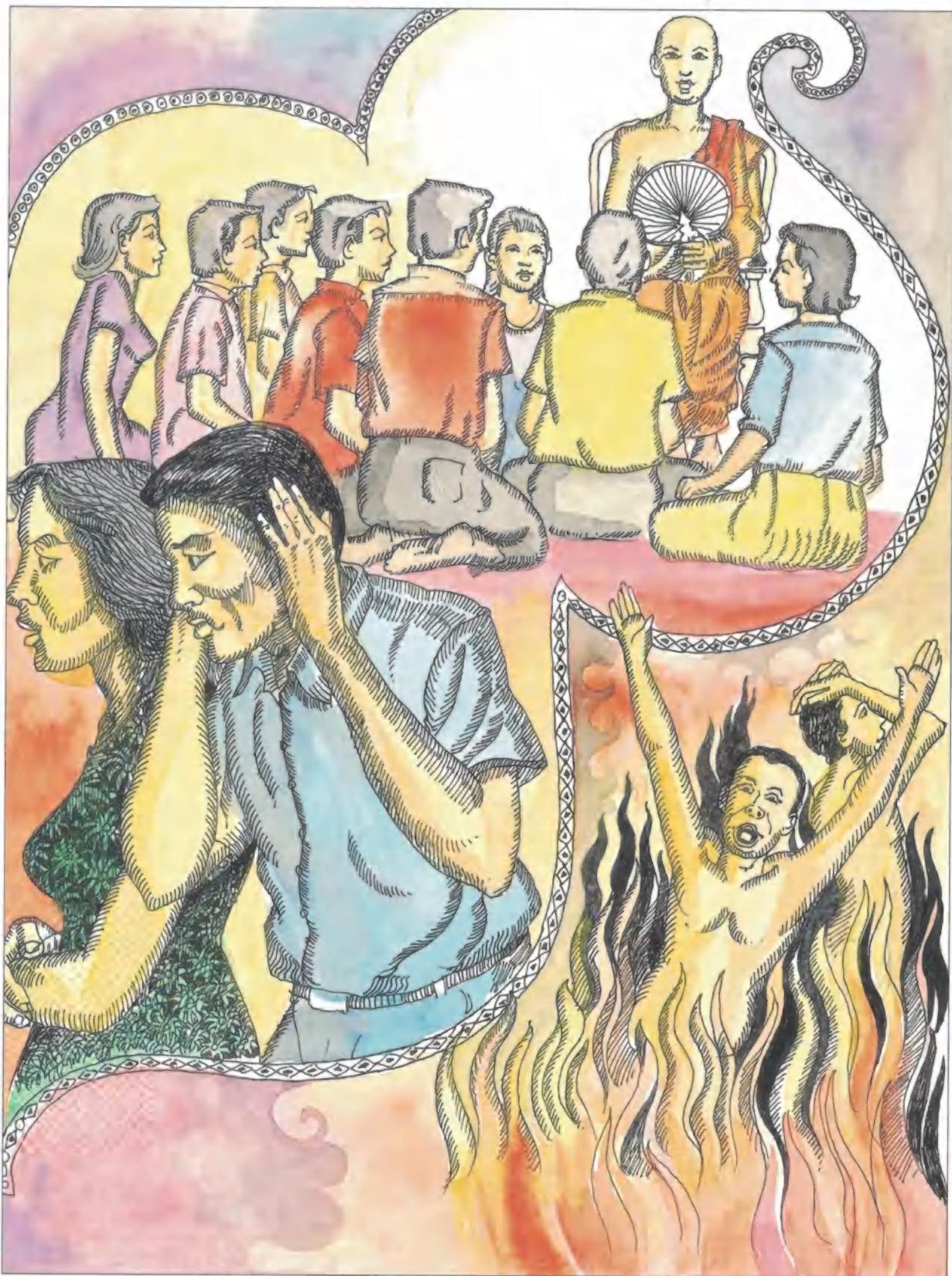
If a human being wants to indulge in sensual pleasures that being, too, will have to suffer twenty-five forms of fears. These twenty-five forms of fears include birth, decay, disease, death, fear from kings, fear from thieves, fear from fire, fear from water, etc. To avoid being threatened by these twenty-five forms of threats, he has to give up the indulgence in sensual pleasures just as the hawk had to give up the lump of flesh to free itself from the aggressive attack of other hawks.



Dhamma for peace

The Buddha's Teachings are sweet to the ear. They bring about peace. You have ears that are not deaf, to listen to the Buddha's words. There is no act of merit that is too difficult for you to perform.

But what is difficult to do is to endure
the suffering in four woeful states.



DHAMMA FOR PEACE

Seta	salasana muni baña äta	sumihiri
äta	topagē kan äsumata	nobihiri
näta	karaṇaṭa pinakut me topaṭa	bäri
sata	-ra apā duk vada vindinata	bäri

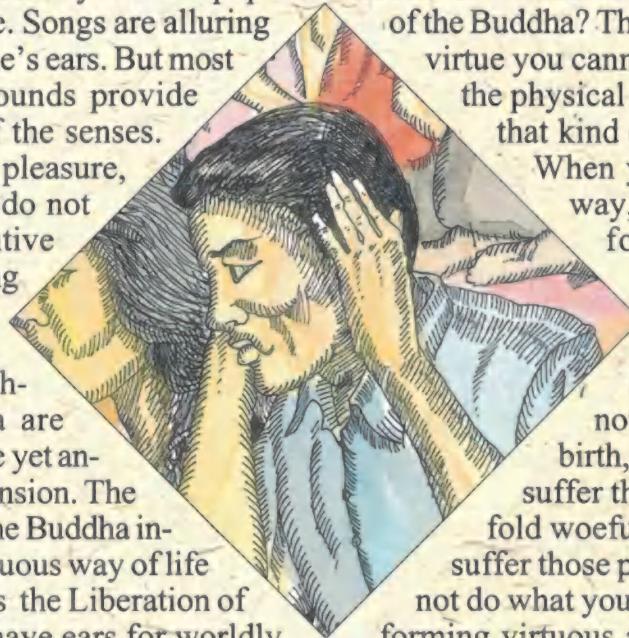
There exists the extremely sonorous preaching of the Buddha that brings about peace. You possess ears that are not deaf but capable of hearing. There is no incapacity in you to perform merit. What you are incapable of is experiencing painful torture in the four downfalls.

Commentary

People take delight in pleasant sounds. That is the reason why music is popular everywhere. Songs are alluring - they are a treat to one's ears. But most of these pleasant sounds provide only the pleasure of the senses. Beyond that sensual pleasure, many sweet sounds do not contribute any incentive towards virtuous living that will lead to Liberation. But, on the other hand, the Teachings of the Buddha are also sweet. They have yet another important dimension. The sweet Teachings of the Buddha invariably lead to a virtuous way of life that certainly ensures the Liberation of beings. Just as you have ears for worldly music, you have a developed faculty to hear the Words of the Buddha. When you have

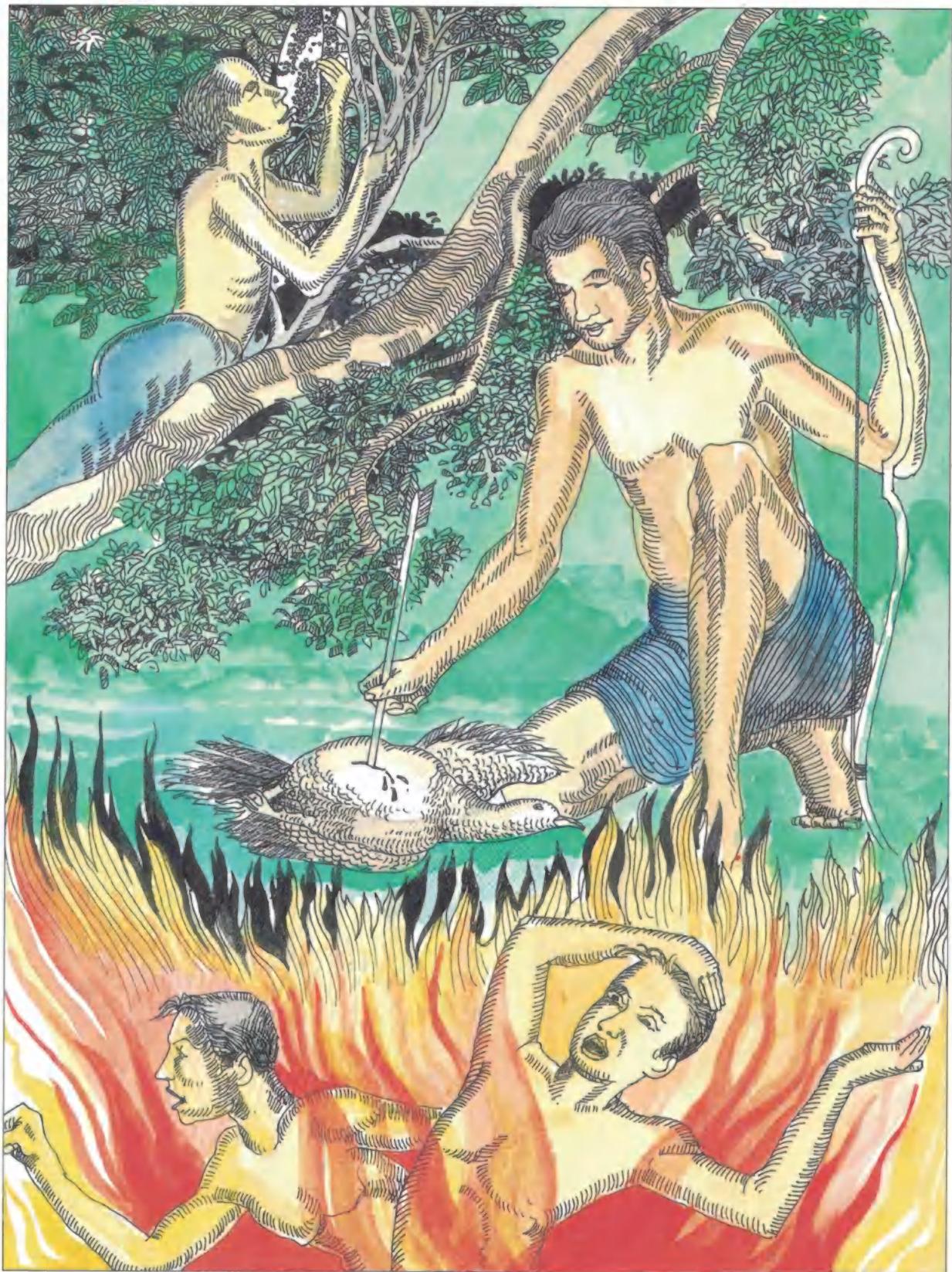
such an efficient faculty, why should you not make use of it to listen to the Teachings of the Buddha? There is hardly any act of virtue you cannot perform. You have the physical and mental ability for that kind of meritorious action. When you are endowed that way, why do you not perform wholesome actions?

Although there is no act of merit you cannot perform during this birth, you will not be able to suffer the tortures of the four-fold woeful states. If you cannot suffer those privations, why do you not do what you can do - which is performing virtuous acts - that will ensure well-being in the births to come?



Suffering for sin is fire

When you do evil things, it is as sweet as honey. But when you suffer for it, it is as harsh as fire. Understand the advice given to you to get rid of evil actions, and do not allow the three doors of perception to let evil in.



FIRES OF SIN (AKUSALA)

Karana	kalata pav mihiрия	mī sē
vindina	kalata duk dādiveyi	ginisē
ändina	e pav duralana	upadēsē
nuduna	mänavi tun dora	avākasē

When performing demerit, it is sweet like honey. When experiencing (its consequence), suffering is amplified like fire. Recognizing the admonition that contributes to the elimination of such demerit, give no opportunity at the three doors.

Commentary

Honey is among the sweetest of tastes human beings know. People like to enjoy the sweetness of honey over and over. Some pleasant things and experiences are described as "honey". Activities that are considered sinful tend, at times, to be delightful. When people indulge in some sensual pleasures, the experience is like the sweet taste of honey.

Because of the honey-like delight they obtain through sinful acts, some would want to repeat them. While repeating these experiences, they feel a heightened sense of pleasure. But, it is an entirely different story when they have to suffer the evil results of such sensual experiences. Those pleasures which were like honey begin to feel like fire when they have to suffer the evil results of those so-called pleasures.

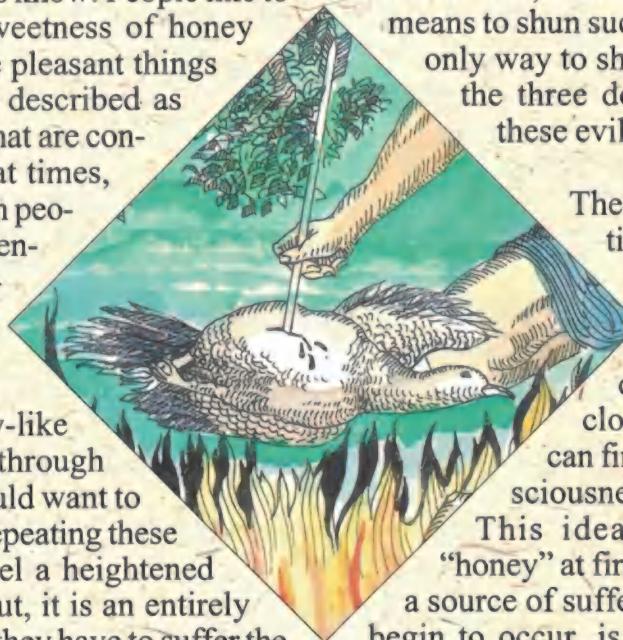
If that is how pleasures turn out to be in the end, one has to learn the real nature of those

sensual enjoyments. When they are understood as evil, one must devise ways and means to shun such false pleasures. The only way to shun such evil is to shut the three doors of perception to these evils.

The three doors of perception are: the body (*kāyā*); the word (*vācā*); and the mind (*citta*). When the three

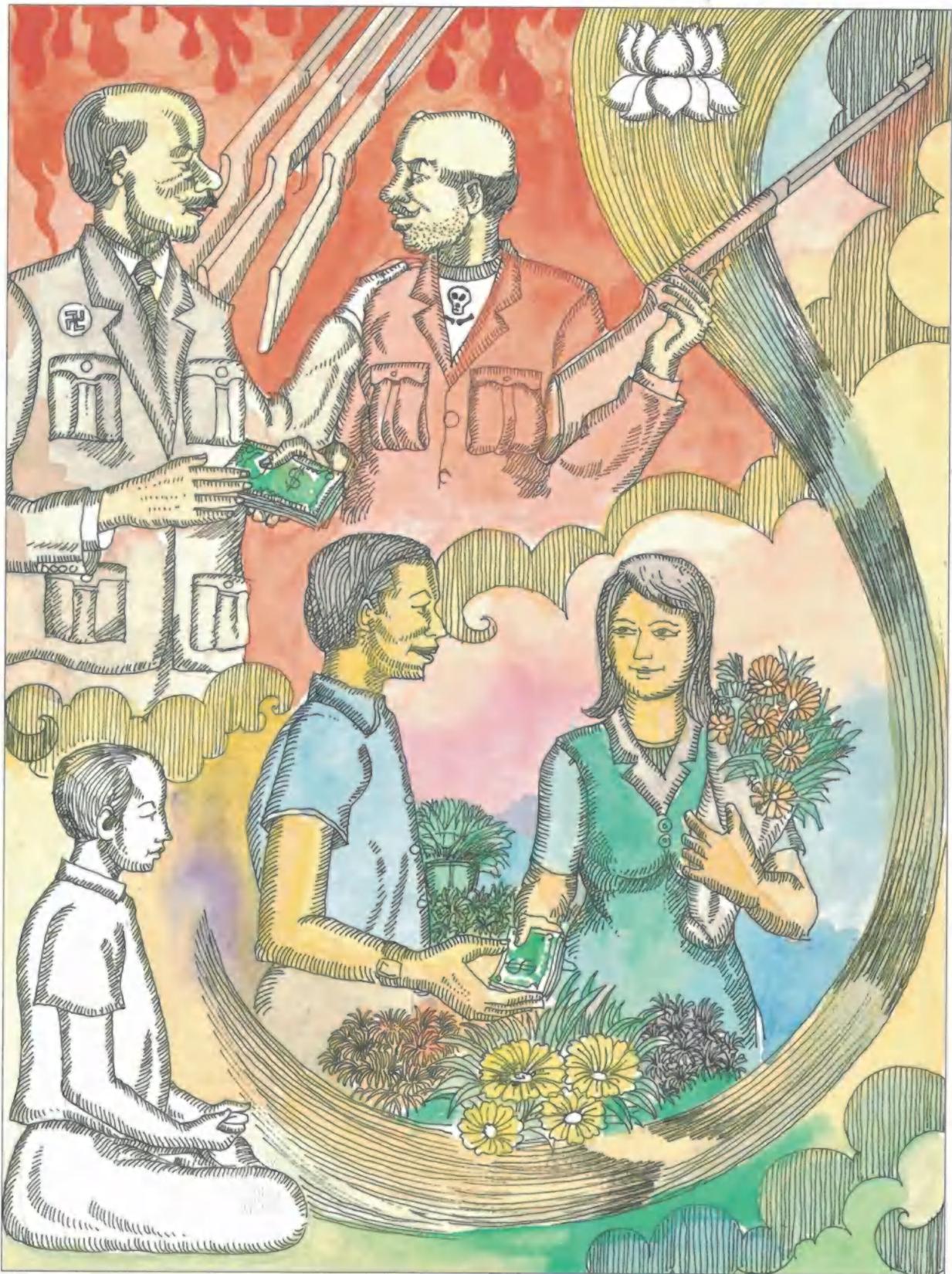
doors of perception are closely guarded, no evil can find its way into the consciousness of a human being.

This idea of pleasure being "honey" at first and turning out to be a source of suffering when evil results begin to occur, is found in a Stanza in Dhammapada which reads this way: "**Madhuvā maññatibālo - yāva pāpam na paccati-Yadāca paccatipāpam - atha bālo dukkham nigacchati**" "The foolish consider evil to be honey as long as their evil results do not come to a head. When they suffer the evil results, the foolish begin to repent.



Shun sin

“ It is better by far to die justly than to live a life of sin “. These are the words of the Buddha. Remembering such advice, perform acts of merit and attain Nibbana.



Adamin	jīvat venavā	vitarāta
dähämin	miya yanu sonda mäyi dana	haṭa
melesin	vadahaṭa muni bana	sihikoṭa
säbävin	pin koṭa pāminev	nivanaṭa

"For the creatures, a righteous death is indeed better than unrighteous living." Reminiscing the preachings of the Sage highlighting such admonitions, perform merit with sincerity and attain freedom.

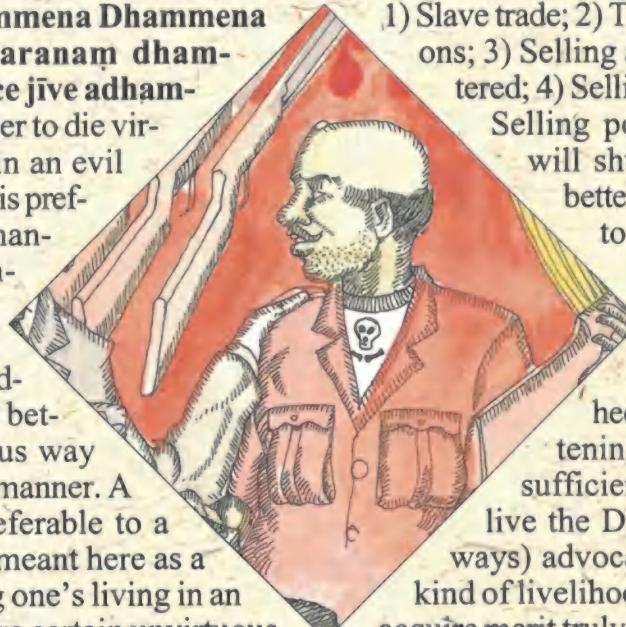
Commentary

In "Theri Gatha" (Psalms of the Sisters) the following Stanza occurs:
Jivitañca adhammena Dhammena maranañcayam Maranam dhammikam seyyo Yam ce jīve adhammakam "It is far better to die virtuously than to live in an evil way. A virtuous death is preferable to living in a manner that is not righteous." The present Stanza, too, echoes the above idea. According to this Stanza it is better to die in a virtuous way than to live in an evil manner. A virtuous death is preferable to a life of vice. What is meant here as a life of vice, is earning one's living in an evil manner. There are certain unvirtuous trades that have been described in the com-

mentaries. There are five forms of trades that are considered to be vicious. They are:

1) Slave trade; 2) Trade in harmful weapons; 3) Selling animals to be slaughtered; 4) Selling intoxicants; and 5)

Selling poisons. The virtuous will shun these trades. It is better to die virtuously than to earn a living through vices. These are the words of the Buddha. A virtuous person should pay due heed to these words. Listening to His words is not sufficient by itself. One must live the Dhamma (the virtuous ways) advocated by Him. By that kind of livelihood, one will be able to acquire merit truly, and eventually reach Liberation.



Tears exceed the ocean

Even the water of all oceans cannot equal the drops of tears shed by just one person over the death of that person's mother in succeeding births. If so, why are you still attached to this life-cycle?



OCEANS OF TEARS

Eka ma	sataku tama mav mala	dukaṭā
vena ma	hāndū kandulē	binduvalaṭā
me hāma	muhudu diya aduvana	kalaṭā
tava ma	sasara ālaya ayi	topatā

When the water of all the oceans is less than the drops of tears shed by one being in grief over the death of its mother, why do you still have attachment to the life-process?

Commentary

Men and women who inhabit today's world would have had innumerable previous births. In the course of their wanderings in the ocean of *samsāra* (existence), they would have had to separate from loved ones on a multiplicity of occasions.

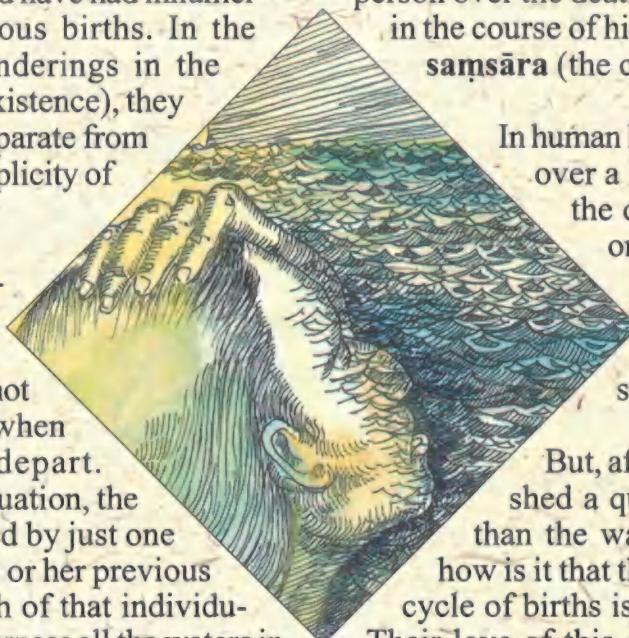
Many a time, each individual would have lost one's mother. Most individuals cannot help but shed tears when their loved ones depart. Given this kind of situation, the quantum of tears shed by just one individual during his or her previous births, over the death of that individual's mother, would surpass all the waters in all the oceans. The Buddha has expressed this idea in "Anamatagga Samyutta".

"The waters of the four great oceans are less

than the quantity of tears shed by just one person over the death of his or her mother, in the course of his or her wanderings in *samsāra* (the cycle of births).

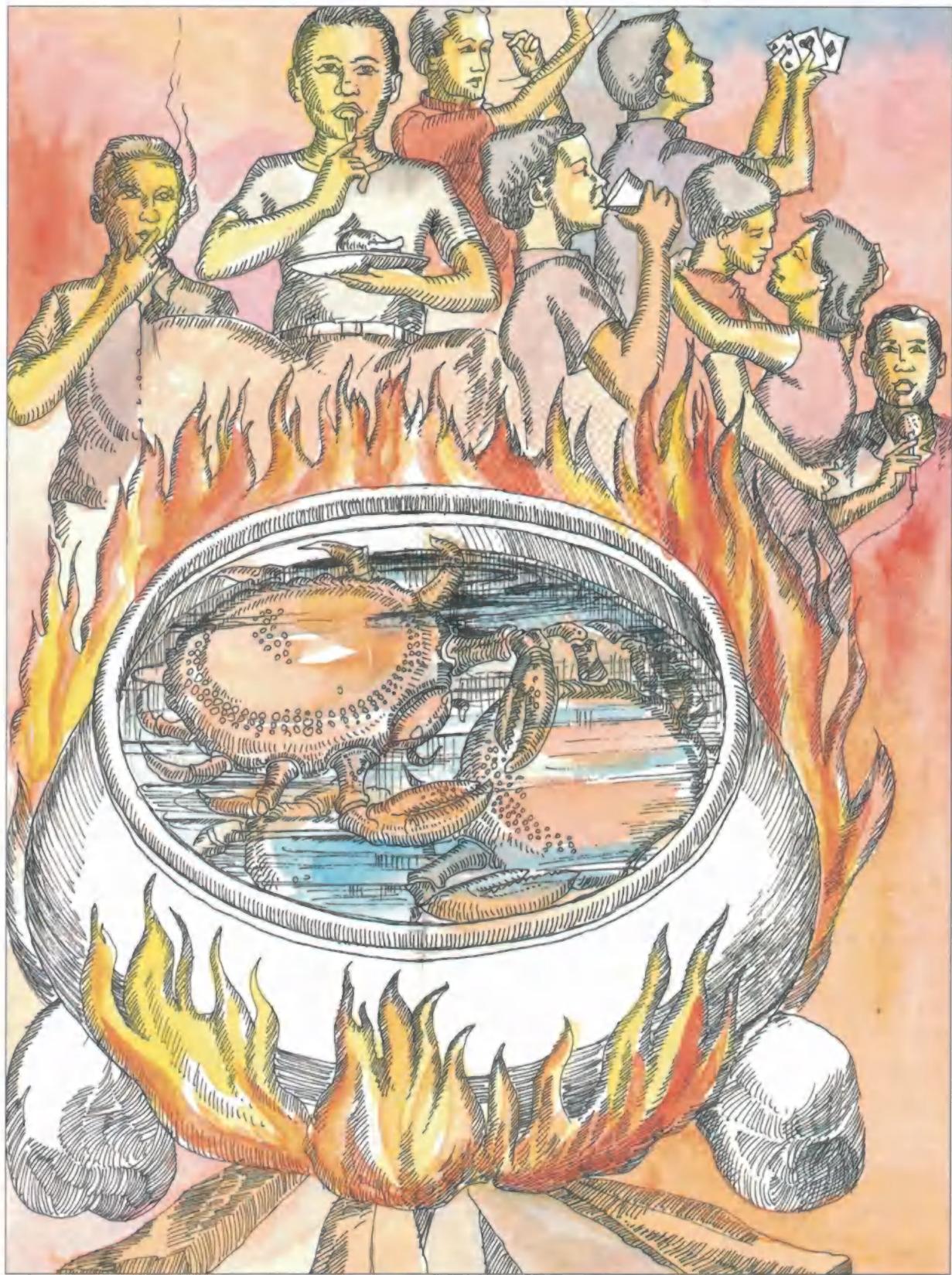
In human life when a person cries over a long period of time at the death of someone, his or her tears get dried up. With the shedding of tears the love and affection also get substantially reduced.

But, after each individual has shed a quantity of tears, more than the waters of great oceans, how is it that their attachment to this cycle of births is not still diminished? Their love of this cycle of existence remains still strong. That is why they keep on being reborn.



Crab in water pot

The crab sports in the water-pot until the fire is lit under it. If you consider this false sense of comfort of the crab, you will find that there is no pleasure in sensual enjoyment.



CRAB IN COOKING POT

Lipa	gini molavana tek diya	säliyē
säpa	-yak yayi kakuļuva diya	keļiyē
epa	-mana topa sitatot	nohäkiliyē
säpa	-yak nam näta kamrasa	keļiyē

Until the fire is kindled (underneath), a crab in a pot of water plays in the water considering it to be an enjoyment. If you were to think as such without concealment (i.e., being true to yourself), (you will realize that) there is no enjoyment in sporting with the taste of pleasures.

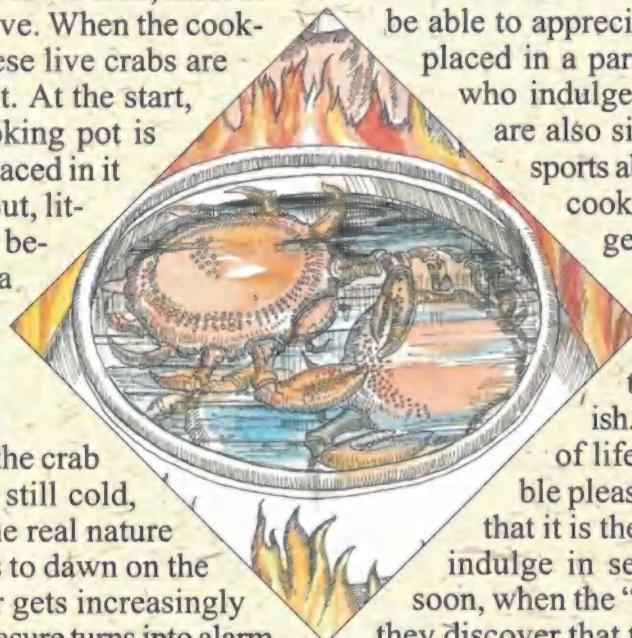
Commentary

In most countries, crabs are relished. Those who would eat crab, most of ten take them live. When the cooking process starts these live crabs are placed in a water-pot. At the start, the water in the cooking pot is cold. The live crab placed in it sports in the water. But, little by little, the water begins to get heated, as a fire is kindled underneath the cooking pot.

The pleasure felt by the crab when the water was still cold, begins to change. The real nature of the process begins to dawn on the crab, when the water gets increasingly heated. The initial pleasure turns into alarm.

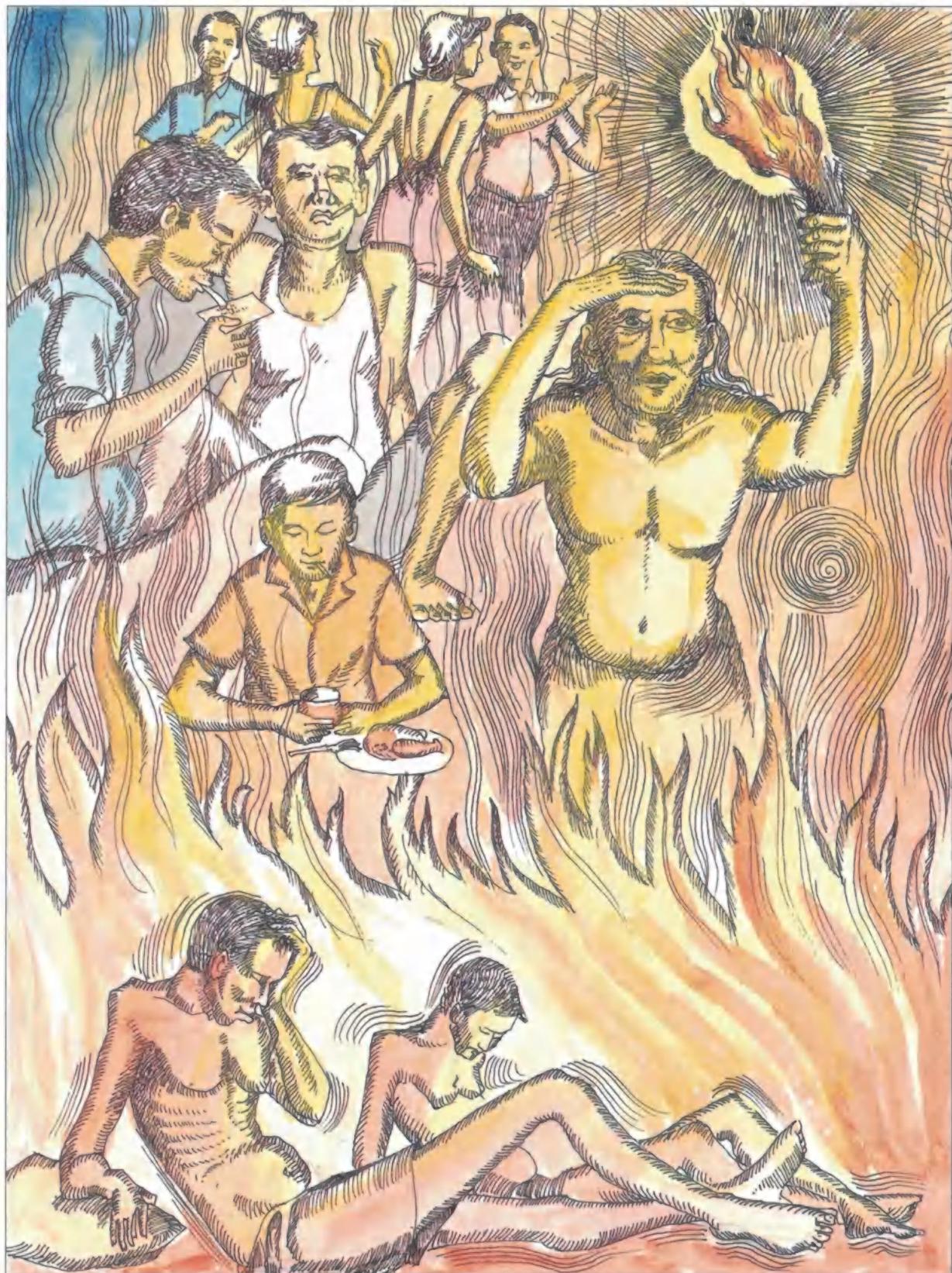
Most human beings cannot consider this

situation. If they give some thought to the fate of the crab in the cooking pot, they will be able to appreciate that they, too, are placed in a parallel situation. Those who indulge in sensual pleasures are also similar to the crab that sports about in the water in the cooking pot until the water gets heated up. Those given to the pleasures of the senses indulge in those activities with great relish. They think of that kind of life as the highest possible pleasure. They tend to feel that it is the highest happiness to indulge in sensual pleasure. But, soon, when the “water begins to boil”, they discover that the enjoyment of sensual pleasure is devoid of true happiness.



Fruit of sin

The person who holds a burning clump of grasses against the wind, will have his hand burnt. In the same way people describe sensual pleasures as fruit of high taste. Yet the fruit of such enjoyment makes one burn in Hell.



FRUITS OF SIN (AKUSALA)

Udu sula	-ngāṭa alvāgena	yannē
taṇasula	nodävī nam ata	dannē
vara pala	-yayi kamrasa	tepalannē
eda kala	kam nirayē	pāsavannē

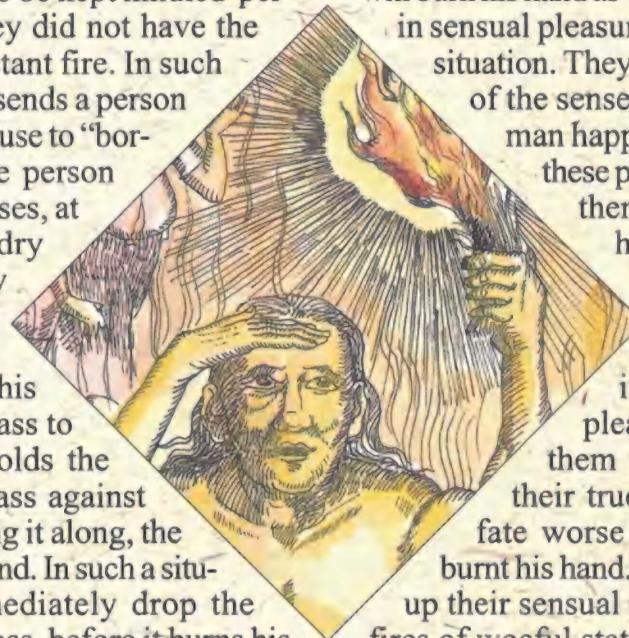
A person holding a torch of grass with the wind blowing from the top may not be aware of it, but his hand does. (Likewise,) one speaks of taste of pleasure as "exotic fruit". Yet the fruits of such actions are produced in hell.

Commentary

In the human communities of the past ages, fire had to be kept kindled perpetually as they did not have the means to light an instant fire. In such cultures, one family sends a person to the neighbour's house to "borrow" some fire. The person who brings the fire uses, at times, a clump of dry grass which easily catches fire.

That person brings this burning clump of grass to light a fire. If he holds the lighted clump of grass against the wind, while taking it along, the flame will burn his hand. In such a situation he must immediately drop the clump of burning grass, before it burns his

hand. If he did not drop it, the burning clump will burn his hand as well. Those who indulge in sensual pleasures are also in a similar situation. They consider the pleasures of the senses to be the highest human happiness. They hold on to these pleasures without giving them up. The person who held the clump of burning grass against the wind had his hand burnt. But, those who indulge in sensual pleasures without giving them up when they realize their true nature, will suffer a fate worse than the person who burnt his hand. Those who do not give up their sensual pleasures suffer in the fires of woeful states.



Borrowed ornaments.

A person borrows ornaments for an auspicious occasion. By that act he becomes indebted. Similarly do not become haughty about enjoyments you have received from your past birth and through that haughtiness qualify to enter hell.



BORROWED ORNAMENTS

Pirulen aragat abarana
damamin gätivana aya men
pera pin ätitek vindinā
tepi dän udanguva novadiv

mangulāta
anunaṭa
säpatāta
nirayaṭa

Like a person who wears borrowed ornaments for an auspicious occasion and thereby becomes indebted, being haughty about the enjoyments you have gotten on the basis of past merit, make no entry into hell.

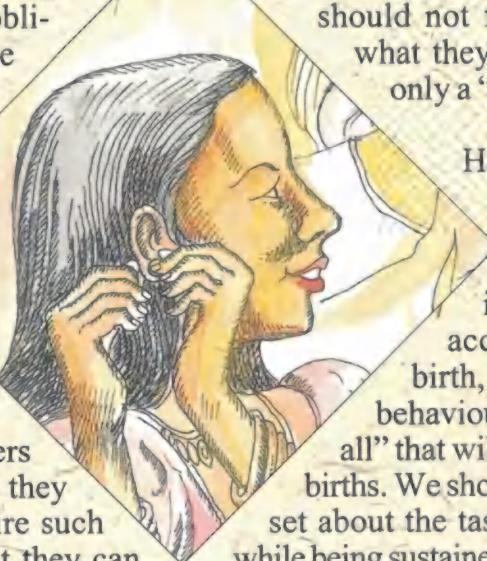
Commentary

Occasionally, people borrow various costumes and ornaments when they participate in festivals or special events. Those who borrow such ornaments feel that they are under obligation to those from whom these various items were borrowed.

At times, those who use these borrowed items feel a sense of elation when they deck themselves in those borrowed things. They have no reason to feel that way, because those fineries have to be returned to the owners after the temporary use. What they should do, if at all, is to acquire such fineries for themselves, so that they can use them without feeling obliged to anyone.

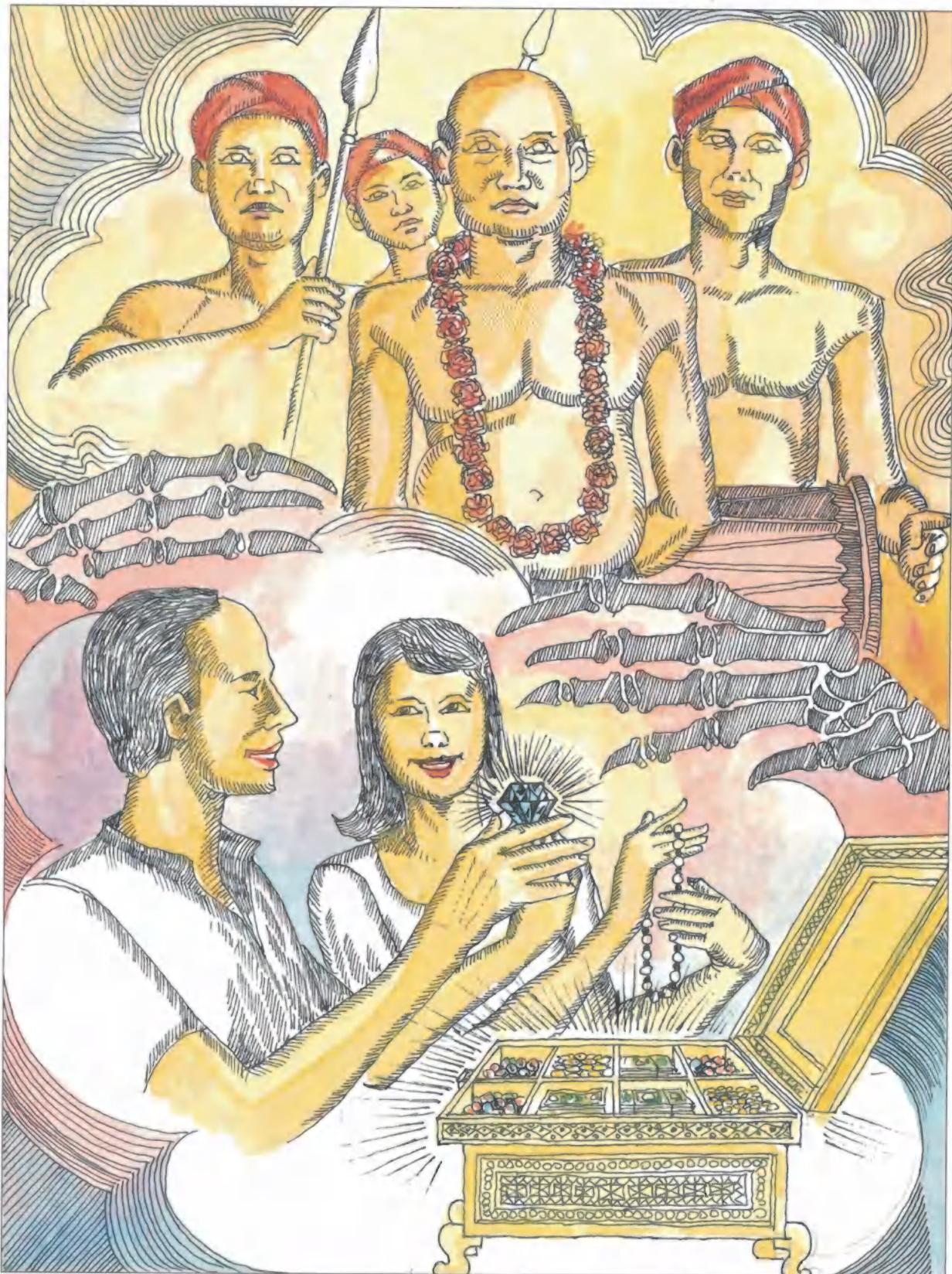
The parallel is quite clear. What human-beings enjoy during the present births are those merits they have “borrowed” from the good deeds of the past births. They should not feel too elated about what they enjoy today. This is only a “temporary” pleasure.

How can one make this present enjoyment permanent? It is by acquiring merit during this birth. What we accumulate during this birth, through our virtuous behaviour, is the “where-with-all” that will serve us in the future births. We should quite meticulously set about the task of acquiring merit, while being sustained by what we have borrowed from our past births.



Greed leads to death

The condemned thief, being led to the execution grounds, is bound, decked with garlands of hibiscus flowers and is given an escort of drummers. If like that criminal, you were to be greedy of the wealth you have acquired you will be tricked by Mara (Death).



GREED LEADS TO DEATH

Vada	-yaṭa bända gena gena yana	sorutā
vada	mal dam lū bera	pirivaraṭā
lada	isurehi loba vū vot	topaṭā
eda	säpatehi kaṭa kam maru	ravaṭā

If you were to be enamoured with the opulence of a thief, who is bound and taken to be executed, such as the garlands of hibiscus with which he is draped or the retinue of drummers, that too is a trickery played by Mara on you in regard to the enjoyments.

Commentary

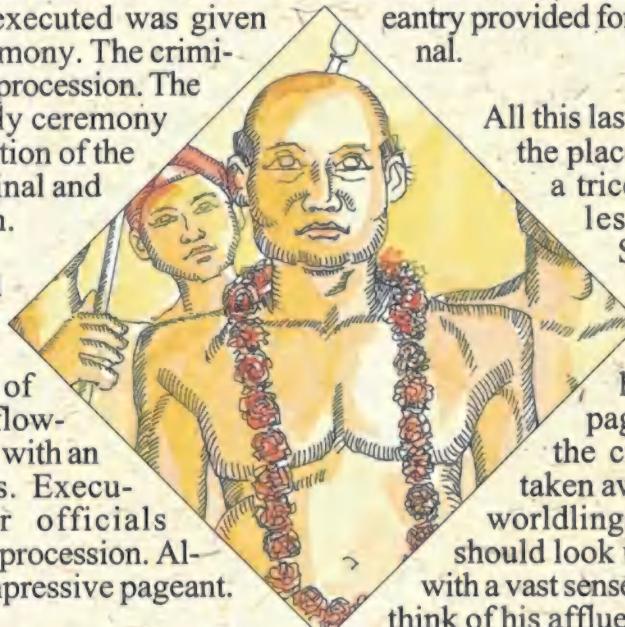
In terms of an ancient tradition in certain cultures, a criminal who was being taken to be executed was given some pomp and ceremony. The criminal was led away in a procession. The purpose of this deadly ceremony was to draw the attention of the populace to the criminal and not at all to exalt him.

He was marched along with his hands tied behind him. He was given a garland of bright red hibiscus flowers. He was provided with an escort of drummers. Executioners and other officials marched along in the procession. Altogether, it was an impressive pageant.

But, if the condemned criminal were to think of all this pomp and pageantry as a matter for elation, it will be grossly unreal. If the criminal were to think of all this as his possessions, he will equally be mistaken. The ordinary worldling, too, is placed in very much the same situation. He is likely to get

elated by all the worldly pleasures that surround him. But, all this is similar to the pageantry provided for the condemned criminal.

All this lasts only until he reaches the place of execution. And in a trice, he is executed. The lesson implied in this Stanza is very direct. Worldlings should never get elated by the possessions they have. All that is like the pageantry that is given to the criminal who is being taken away for execution. The worldlings, on the other hand, should look upon all his prosperity with a vast sense of humility. He should think of his affluence only as a means to lead a life of virtue. He must concern himself totally with the task of acquiring merit during this brief spell of pageantry given him before the inevitable "execution". Therefore, one must not get deceived by worldly affluence.



Enjoyment is empty

The breeze that is felt by the thief while falling when he is thrown down, off the top of a mountain, is of no use to him to quell his body heat. Similarly, of what use is enjoyment to you who after a life of sin will fall into the mouth of Mara (Death) ?



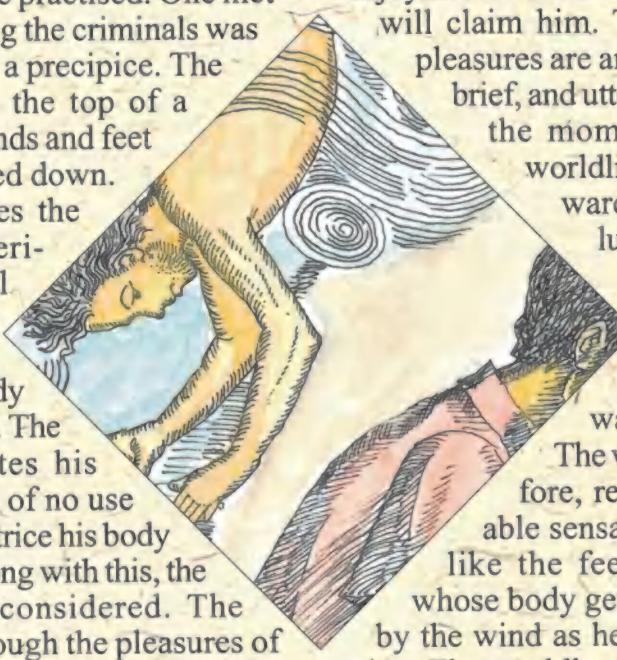
PLEASURE IS ILLUSION

Dämuven	giri mudunen hena	soruṭā
pavanin	kam näti men änga	gimaṭā
jarayen	midemin yana maru	muvaṭā
säpatin	kima in kam kaṭa	topaṭā

Just as the breeze makes no difference to the sweating body of a thief as he falls after being thrown from the summit of a mountain, what is the use of enjoyment to you who, after performing (evil) deeds, being relieved from decay, yet moves into the jaws of Mara.

Commentary

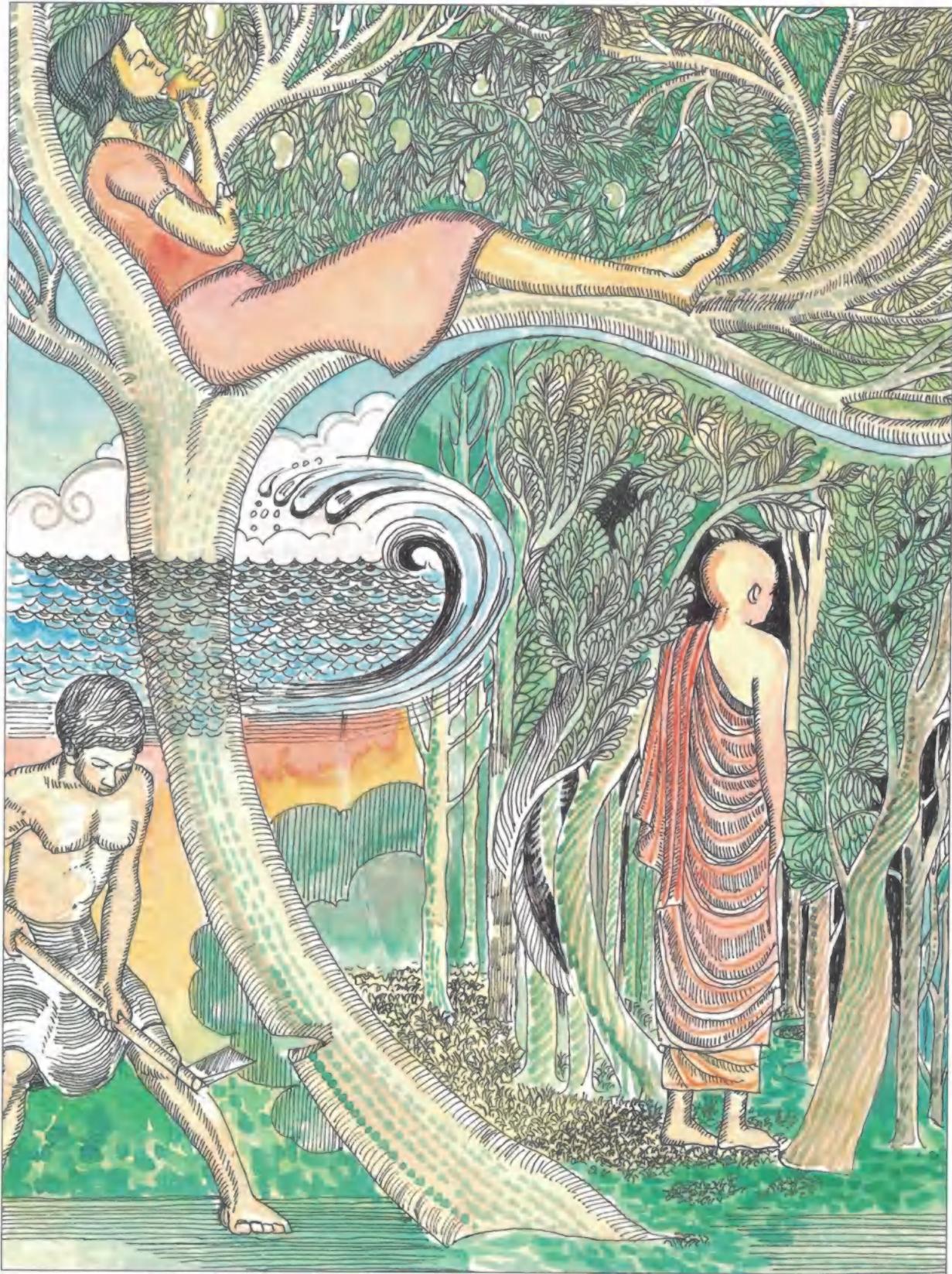
In the ancient world, several forms of executions were practised. One method of executing the criminals was throwing them down a precipice. The criminal was led to the top of a mountain with his hands and feet bound and was pushed down. This Stanza describes the feeling that is experienced by the criminal as he falls down the precipice. While he falls down fast, his body rushes through the air. The rushing air alleviates his body heat, but this is of no use at all to him - for, in a trice his body will get shattered. Along with this, the parallel has to be considered. The worldling rushes through the pleasures of life headlong. He is very much in the situation of the criminal who is pushed down the precipice and falls headlong. To the worldling the pleasures that he enjoys are like the sensation created by the rushing air



on the body of the falling criminal. All this enjoyment is futile because, in a trice, Death will claim him. Therefore, all sensual pleasures are an irrelevant, extremely brief, and utterly futile luxury. From the moment of his birth, the worldling rushes non-stop towards his death and dissolution. Each human being is, therefore, in the same situation as the criminal who is rushing headlong towards his shattering end. The worldling should, therefore, realize that the pleasurable sensation he experiences is like the feeling of the criminal whose body gets momentarily cooled by the wind as he falls down the precipice. The worldly wealth and the sensual indulgence, the power are all useless if you have committed evil action. To such an individual whose actions have been sinful, the pleasure he enjoys are of no use at all.

Renounce lay life

Examine the evil of these sense - pleasures. Renounce the worthless life and become an ascetic, when you still can. Will a man in a tree enjoying fruits, not climb down before the trunk of the tree is cut down ?



RENOUNCE

Ala	-vana mē kam rasa dosa	yimasā
pala	-yav tapasaṭa puluvan	vayasā
pala	rasa vinda gasa uda un	minisā
mula	sindidnā tek indidō	nobāsā

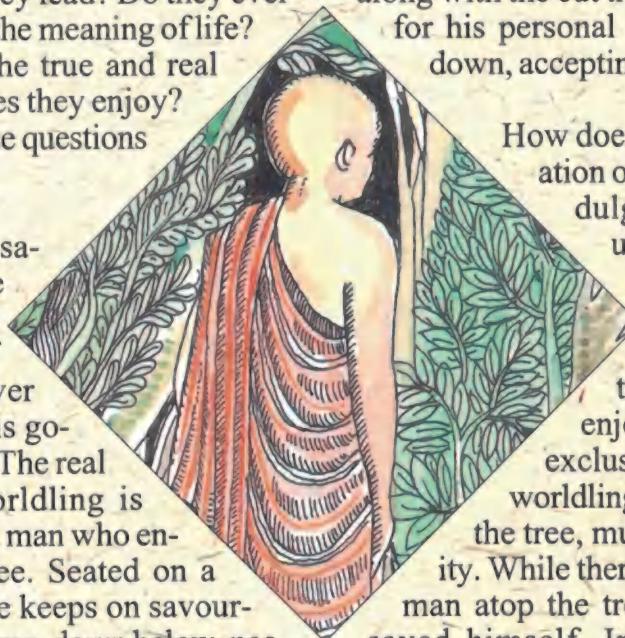
Having examined the blemish in this enticing taste of pleasures, move on to a life of exertion at an age when you are able (to achieve freedom). Will a human being, who remained at the top of a tree enjoying the taste of its fruits, continue to remain there without descending until the root is cut down?

Commentary

Do worldlings ever look objectively at the lives they lead? Do they ever contemplate the meaning of life? Are they aware of the true and real nature of the pleasures they enjoy? The answer to all these questions is "Mostly no."

The worldlings who savour pleasures of life never pause to question the real nature of existence. They never try to find out what is going on around them. The real situation of the worldling is compared to that of a man who enjoys fruit, atop a tree. Seated on a branch of the tree, he keeps on savouring the fruits. Meantime, down below, people are getting ready to cut down the tree. Totally unaware of the move to cut down the tree he has climbed on to, the man continues to enjoy the fruit. The question is, will he continue to be seated atop the tree, forgetting what is happening down below?

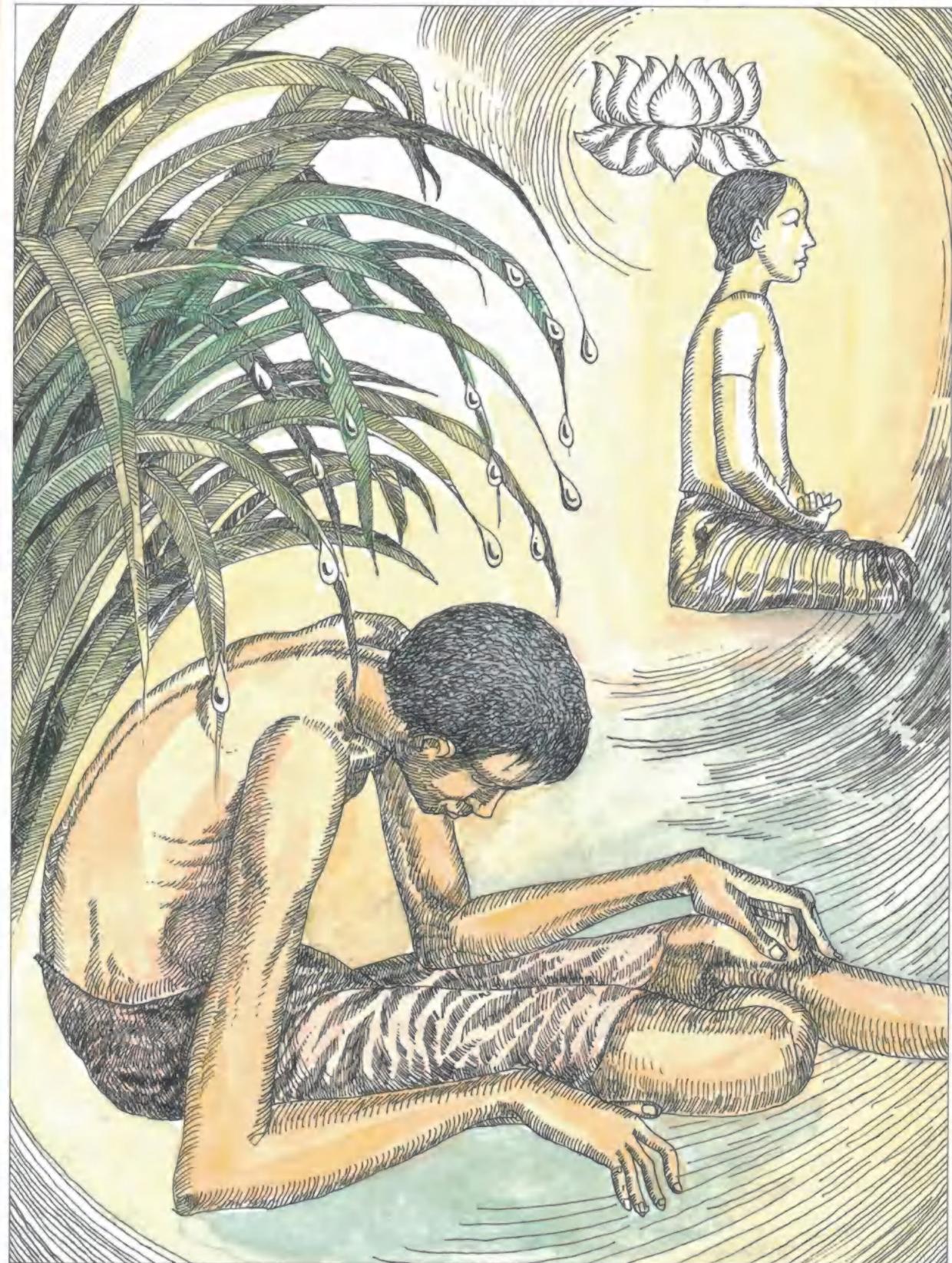
If he continues his perch, he will fall down along with the cut tree. Therefore, in time, for his personal safety he must climb down, accepting reality.



How does this apply to the situation of the worldling? He indulges in sensual pleasures, oblivious of all other developments around him - just like the man atop the tree who is given to the enjoyment of fruits, to the exclusion of everything. The worldling, just like the man atop the tree, must respond to the reality. While there was still time left, the man atop the tree climbed down and saved himself. In the same way, the worldling should realize what is going on, and must climb down. To save himself, and to guard himself in the lives to come, he must start renouncing. That is the only way he can ensure a wholesome existence in the next birth.

words of sages

The words of the sages are indeed true. Accept firmly the fact that the body is impermanent. Life is like a dewdrop at the tip of a blade of grass.
Acquire merit without any delay.



WORDS OF SAGES

Bana nam	niboruya	munivarayinnē
kaya nam	notiraya adahā	gannē
pana nam	tana aga pini bindu	vännē
pina nam	nopamā ya ma	karaganē

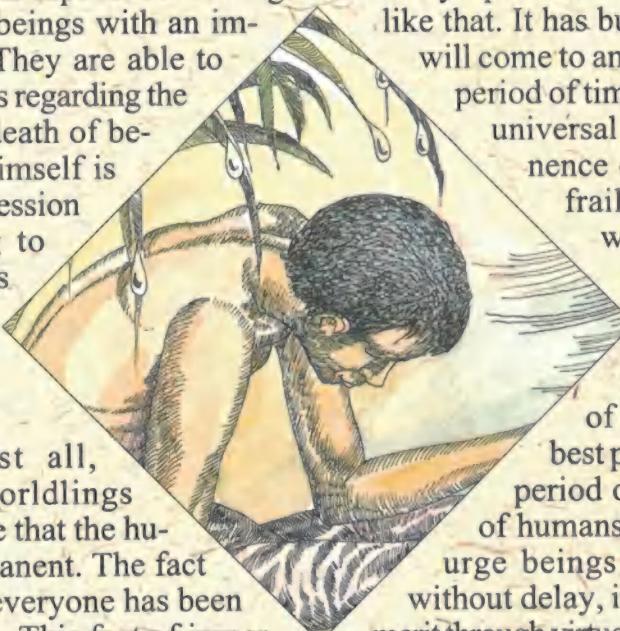
The preachings of the Great Sages are indeed not untrue. Believe that the body is not immutable. Life is like a dew-drop at the tip of a grass. Merit should be performed without being heedless.

Commentary

Muni" - a sage - is an eminently wise person who is capable of viewing the fate of beings with an immense objectivity. They are able to make pronouncements regarding the world, and life and death of beings. The Buddha Himself is described by the expression "Muni". According to this Stanza, statements made by these wise sages are not at all false.

They have, almost all, averred that the worldlings should firmly believe that the human body is impermanent. The fact that death comes to everyone has been stated by these sages. This fact of impermanence never changes. It is universally applicable.

This impermanence of life has been very vividly communicated in an apt image. Life is like a drop of dew at the edge of a blade of grass. It will either fall and disintegrate



at the slightest touch of a breeze, or else it will dry up in the sun. Human life is just like that. It has but a very brief span. It will come to an end after quite a short period of time. This establishes the universal truth of the impermanence of human life and the frailty of the body. This way, anyone can see that a human being has very little time on earth. Given this situation it is the duty of all beings to make the best possible use of the brief period of time at the disposal of humans. Therefore, the sages urge beings to exert themselves without delay, in the task of acquiring merit through virtuous behaviour. The Buddha emphasized the transitory nature of life by the expression "**phen upamam kāyamimam viditvā**" (seeing this human life to be like froth and bubble). The Buddha also said "**ussavoca tanaggamhi**" (like a drop of dew on the edge of a blade of grass).

Sin makes you a goblin

Listen to my constructive advice. Even if you live with a happy mind, committing sinful acts, you are likely to be born a demon, evil spirit or a goblin. When that happens, you will have to roam about afflicted with hunger. Due to your sins you will not be able to acquire any merit.



SINNERS BECOME GOBLINS

Asan	me mā ki deya väda	äтивана
pasan	sitin unnat pav	карамина
upann	-otin matu yak bū	писасуна
sayin	ävida pinakut bări e	павина

Listen to what is said by me which brings about progress. Even if one were to remain with appeased thoughts, yet performing demerit, and if one were to be reborn as a demon, a ghost or a goblin, as a result of such demerit, one may roam about in hunger and not be capable of merit.

Commentary

This Stanza is a very strong warning addressed to those whose ways are evil. The persons to whom these words are addressed go about life doing whatever they wish to do. What they indulge in mostly are unvirtuous activities. They commit sins with no restraint. They are not at all inhibited in the matter of behaving in an evil manner.

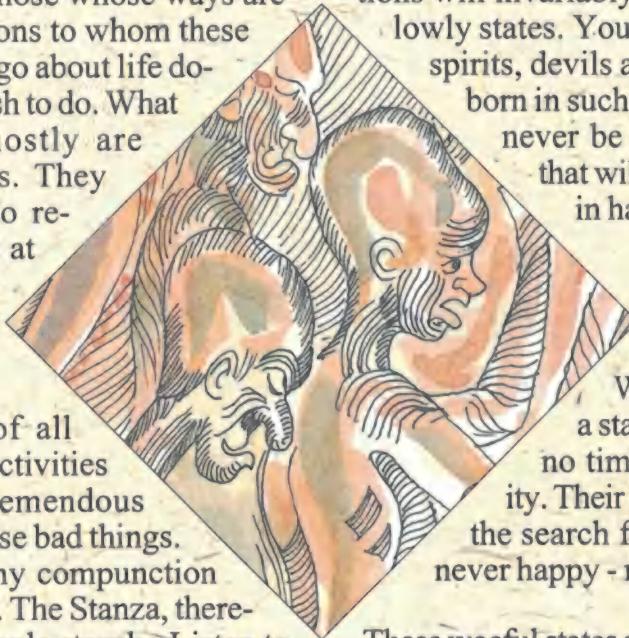
The worst aspect of all these questionable activities is that they take tremendous pleasure in doing those bad things. They do not have any compunction about their evil ways. The Stanza, therefore, warns these people sternly. Listen to the constructive advice given to you. These words are spoken to you with the intention of helping you out of this destructive behaviour.

You happily go about committing these evil actions with no thought whatsoever about

the results that will ensue. These evil actions will invariably make you be born in lowly states. You will be reborn as evil spirits, devils and goblins. If you are born in such woeful states you will never be able to acquire merit that will help you to be reborn in happy states.

When you are in woeful states you will be perpetually hungry. When such beings are in a state of hunger they have no time for any other activity. Their whole life pivots round the search for food. But, they are never happy - never satisfied.

These woeful states are described as **yakkha** - **bhūta** - and **pisāca** - all these are considered evil spirits. **Yakkha** is generally interpreted as "devil". **Bhūta** signifies ghosts. **Pisāca** is a demon. Born in these woeful states, they will never be able to acquire even an iota of merit.



Yama punishes sinners

All those who committed sins will be brought before King Yama of Hell. They will not be allowed to move about freely as they wish. They will have to suffer tortures of Hell.



WAGES OF SIN AKUSALA

Lobē	sitin pav kaļa häma	sataṭā
sabē	kiyati gena gos yama	rajuṭā
ibē	inṭa noyedi situ	rangata
labē	nirāduk pāminē	evitā

For all those beings who have performed demerit, there will be an audience with King Yama. Without letting them be as they wish, they will then face the suffering in hell.

Commentary

There are those who indulge in unwholesome activities with a tremendous sense of relish. To them committing sin is a matter of pleasure. They are thoroughly engrossed in evil ways. Only that form of behaviour gives them a sense of satisfaction.

But, can they continue to behave that way with impunity? Do they think that there will not be any outcome of this kind of unrestrained behaviour? If they thought that they could go on behaving unvirtuously as there is not going to be any bad result or questionable after-effect, they will be wrong. They will not be allowed to remain free after committing evil. The agents of the rulers of the Nether World go about taking note of the behaviour of the people. If there are those who behave badly

they will certainly see to it that such people are duly punished.

According to this Stanza, the agents of the ruler of the Nether World (Yama) will take the culprits to the presence of the ruler of the Nether World. The ruler of the Nether World will listen to the complaint.

After hearing them out, he will decide the kind of punishment that should be given to the culprit.

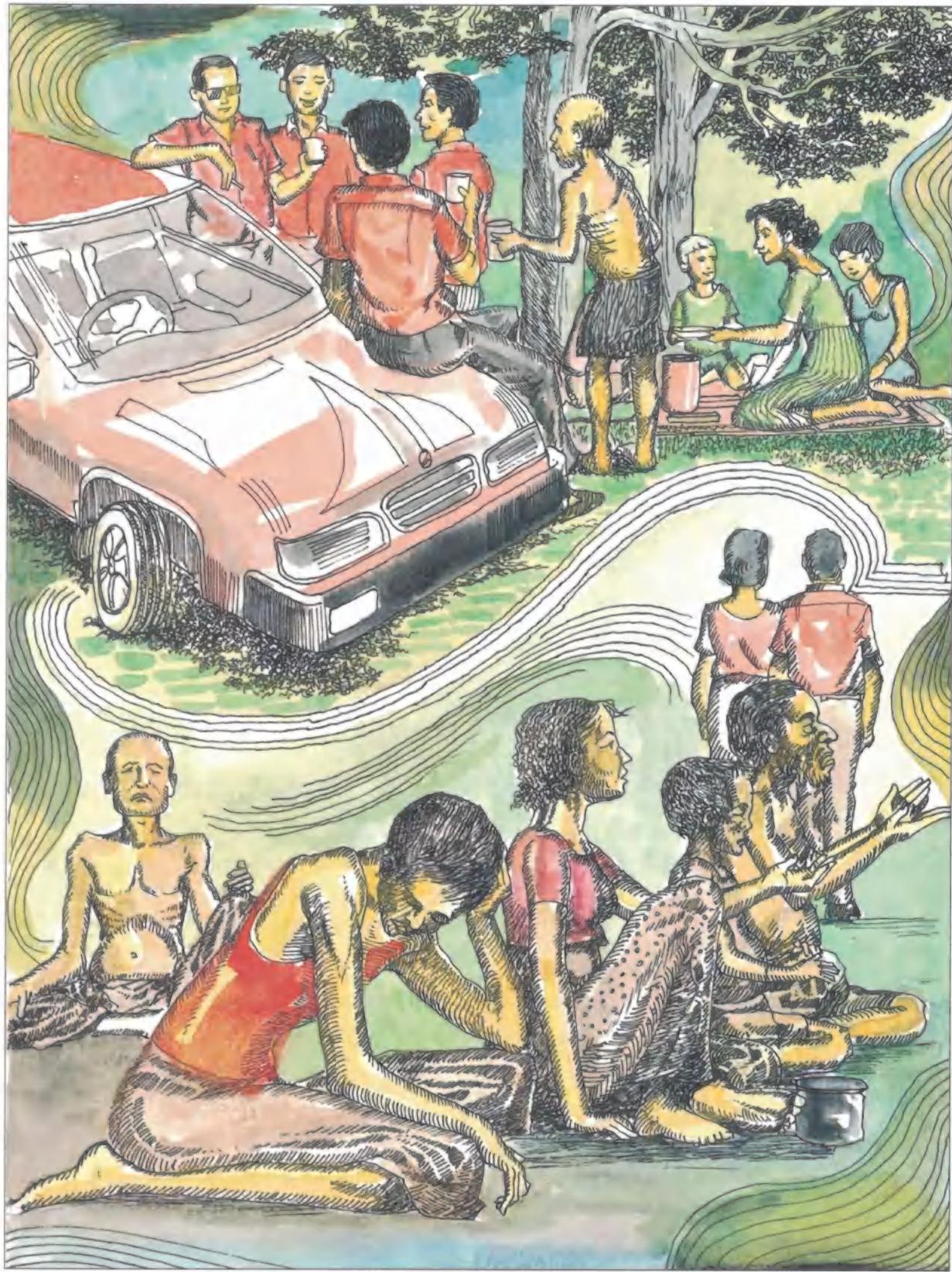
Invariably, the culprit will be condemned to the woeful state.

From then on the culprit will have to suffer the tortures of the woeful state. What is implied by this Stanza is that those who do evil things will have to answer for them, and suffer due punishment. (According to Indian mythology “Yama” is the ruler of the Nether World. His messengers are called “Yama Dūta”).



Sense pleasure leads to woeful states

Some people enjoy luxury and comfort. Those who have seen the results of sin and merit, with their own eyes, tell them what is likely to happen. But still they do not believe. They do not change their ways and do acts of merit. If they fall into Hell, their suffering will be limitless.



SENSE PLEASURE

Tosin	noyek säpa vinda samaharu	niti
äsin	ma däka pav pin kalavun	gati
basin	kivat adahā pin	nokarati
gosin	nirē vätuñot duk him	näti

Some, having enjoyed opulence with zest and having been told by those who have seen with their own eyes the destinies of some who have performed demerit, do not perform merit trustingly. If they fall into hell, they will experience limitless suffering.

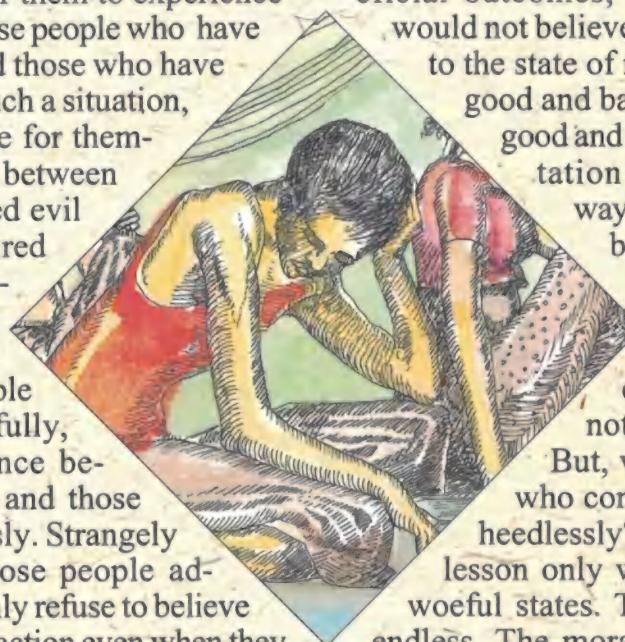
Commentary

In the instance of most men and women it is difficult for them to experience the nature of those people who have done good deeds and those who have resorted to evil. In such a situation, they are likely to see for themselves the difference between those who committed evil and those who acquired merit through wholesome behaviour. Yet again, there could be occasions when people one could rely on fully, explain the difference between wrong-doers and those who behave virtuously. Strangely enough some of those people addicted to sin stubbornly refuse to believe the ill-effects of evil-action even when they see the adverse results with their own eyes.

Even when they are authoritatively told by those who matter that evil deeds bring about

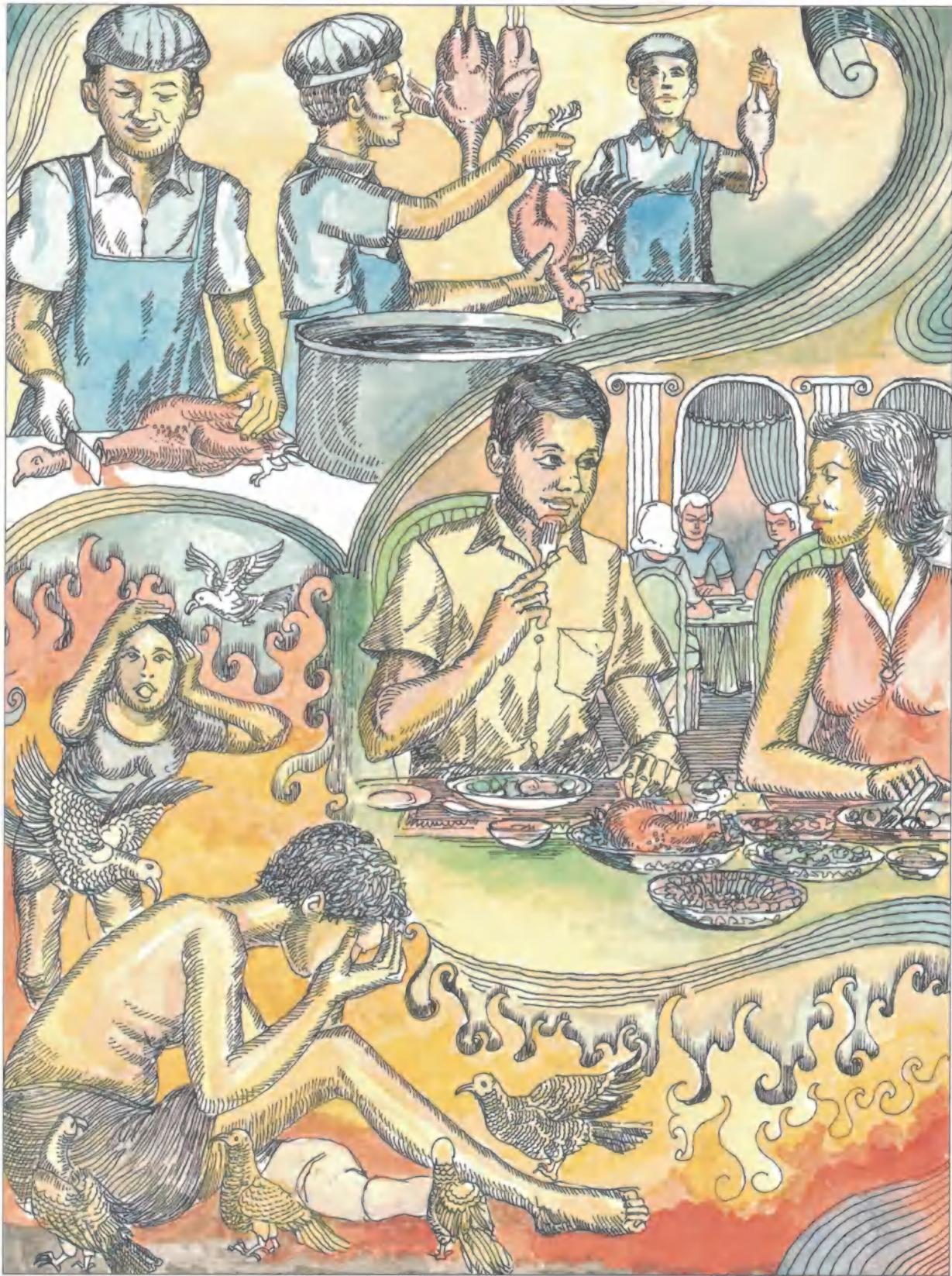
evil results, and that good actions yield beneficial outcomes, there are some who would not believe. When they are given to the state of mind of assuming that good and bad actions do not bring good and bad results, their temptation is to continue their ways. Those people who do bad things will continue their ways uninterrupted. If they continue to pursue wholesome activities it will not create any problem.

But, what happens to those who continued their bad ways heedlessly? They will learn their lesson only when they are born in woeful states. There, the suffering is endless. The moral of the poem is that whether you have experienced the results of actions or not, you must pursue good. But you must always shun sin.



Sin of sense pleasure

People behave foolishly, not knowing what is sinful and what is not. They relish meat, saying "The taste of meat is good". People cannot escape this form of behaviour without falling into Hell. Give up that yearning from today on.



SIN OF KILLING

Pin	pav no dänä mä anuvana kam	kota
kan	-nan mas rasa sonda mä yi kara	tuta
in	gälavenu bäri nogosin nira	yata
dän	e mä älaya arinē ada	sita

Having performed stupid deeds without knowing merit and demerit, delighting in eating (meat), saying: "This taste of meat is good," one cannot escape (from such deeds) without falling into hell. Starting from today let one relinquish such attraction.

Commentary

Those who commit sins are not at all aware, in most instances, of the distinction between evil action and virtuous behaviour. That is why they get tempted to behave in a manner that could be characterized as evil. Those who do evil things are invariably foolish. They are foolish because they cannot discern what is good and what is bad.

One could consider those who eat various forms of meat. They eat the flesh of animals with a delight, saying that the meat is tasty. To eat the kind of flesh they relish, they even slaughter animals. They do so because they have learnt through their previous experience that the flesh of a given animal yields an appealing flavour.

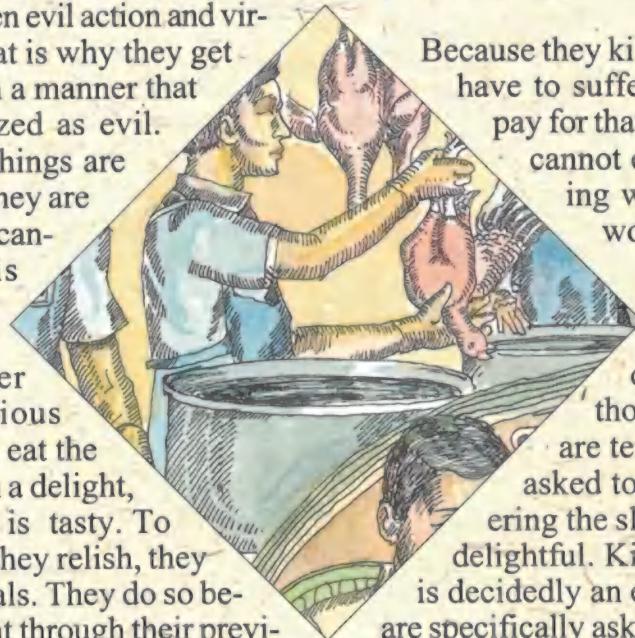
Although they enjoy the dishes they savour, eating the flesh of slaughtered animals, has a later result as well. They have to pay for the slaughter of animals. Here, "pay" does

not imply a monetary transaction. They have to pay for killing the animals in other ways.

Because they killed animals they will have to suffer in woeful states to pay for that evil behaviour. They cannot escape the sin of killing without being born in woeful states.

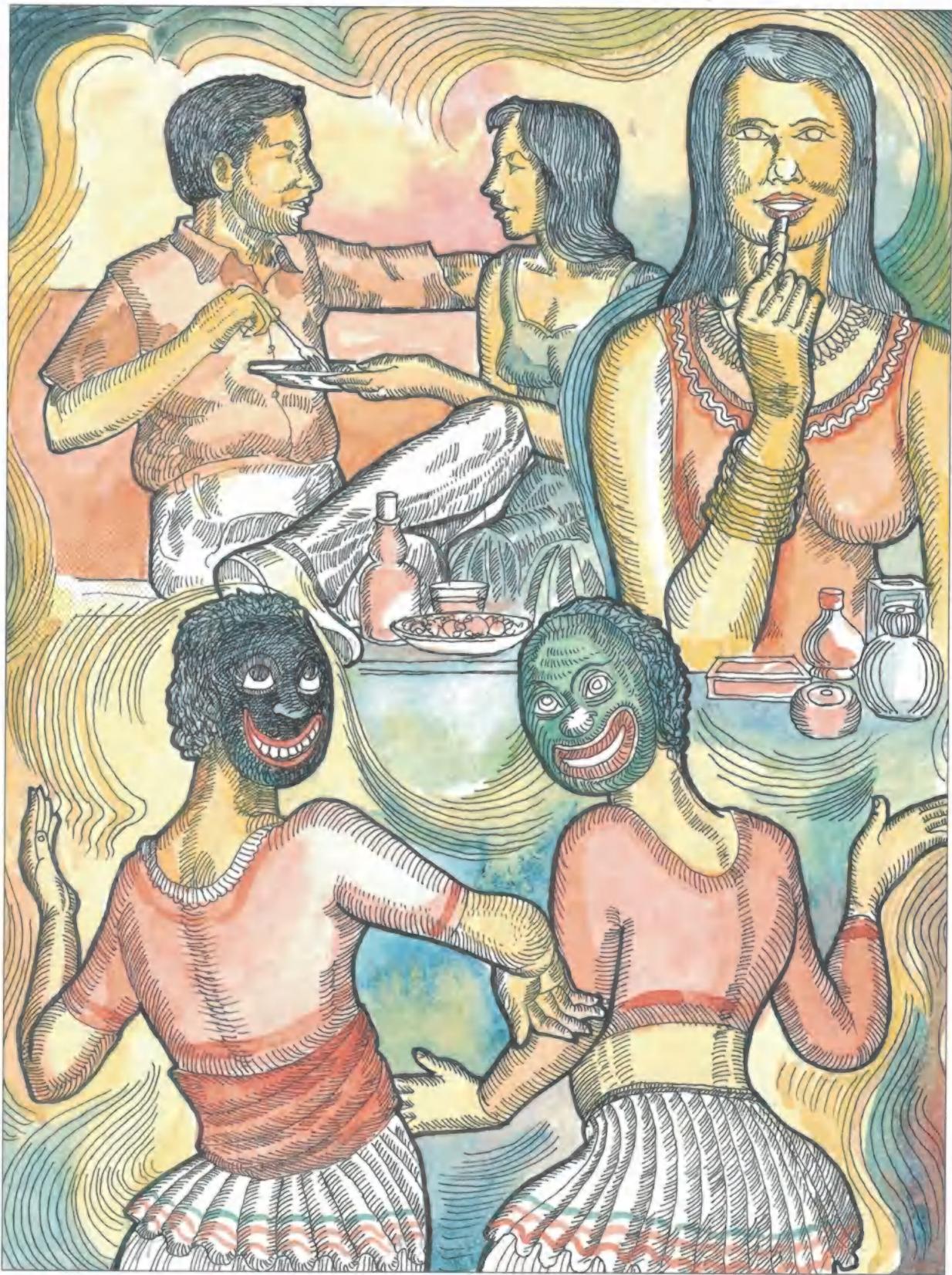
Since this is the inevitable consequence of killing, those sinful people who are tempted to take life are asked to refrain from considering the slaughter of animals as delightful. Killing for any purpose is decidedly an evil action. Buddhists are specifically asked to refrain from taking life.

Therefore, the time to give up the sin of killing, is now. One cannot put it off for a later date. The change must come instantly. The force that will propel an individual to come to such a decision is the thought of the consequences of that evil deed.



Life is a mask dance

They eat delicious food with great relish : apply sweet-smelling facial - paste.
Then deck themselves properly with ornaments that are befitting.
They all look like the short-lived antics of a jester.



MASK DANCE

Kālā	rasa musu bōjana kara	pem
gālā	suvandāti sandunut	manaram
lā lā	abarana nisilesa	sārasum
pālā	giya vāni bahurū	kōlam

Eating tasty food with delight, applying attractive and fragrant unguents and decking oneself with fitting ornaments are like variegated acts of jesters.

Commentary

Consider the life of a person given to sensual pleasures. Their routine of life is a series of activities that yield enjoyment-as they interpret it, that is. They partake of delicious forms of food and drink. They relish them. They are delighted to taste various dishes. Variety impresses them. They take long leisurely hours sitting through their breakfasts, lunches, dinners and banquets.

They deck themselves with endless fineries. They use varieties of perfumes. They make a tremendous effort to improve their physical appearance.

Ornaments are worn. Accessories are utilized. Costumes of great value and of comely appearance are used. They dress to suit different occasions. They wear clothes to attract attention. They apply sandal paste so their bodies will exude a sweet smell.

They lead a life of untold luxury. This kind of sensual pleasure is the end-aim of their

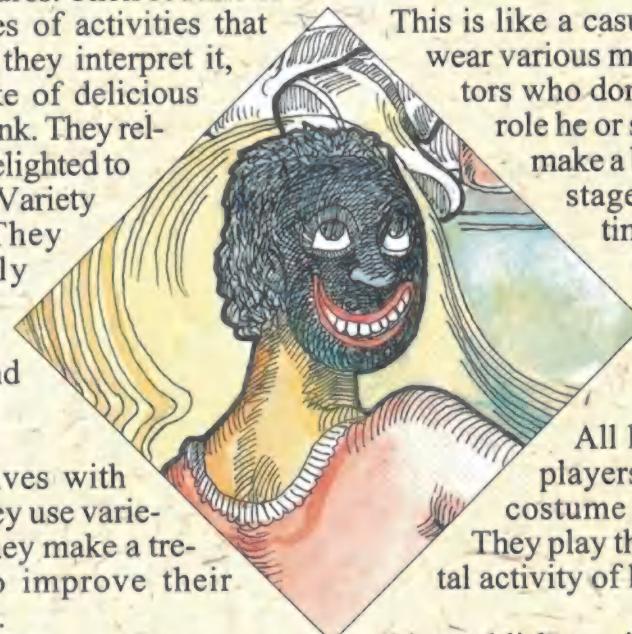
lives. But, what does all this add up to?

This is like a casual mask dance. They wear various masks. Like masked actors who don a given mask for the role he or she plays, these beings make a brief appearance on the stage of life. When their time is gone, they disappear. The whole performance is ephemeral. This is the real nature of life.

All human beings are like players. With make-up and costume they take the stage. They play the allotted role. The total activity of life is like a farce.

This establishes quite clearly the futility of life. Analysed this way, the totality of human existence seems a meaningless series of activities.

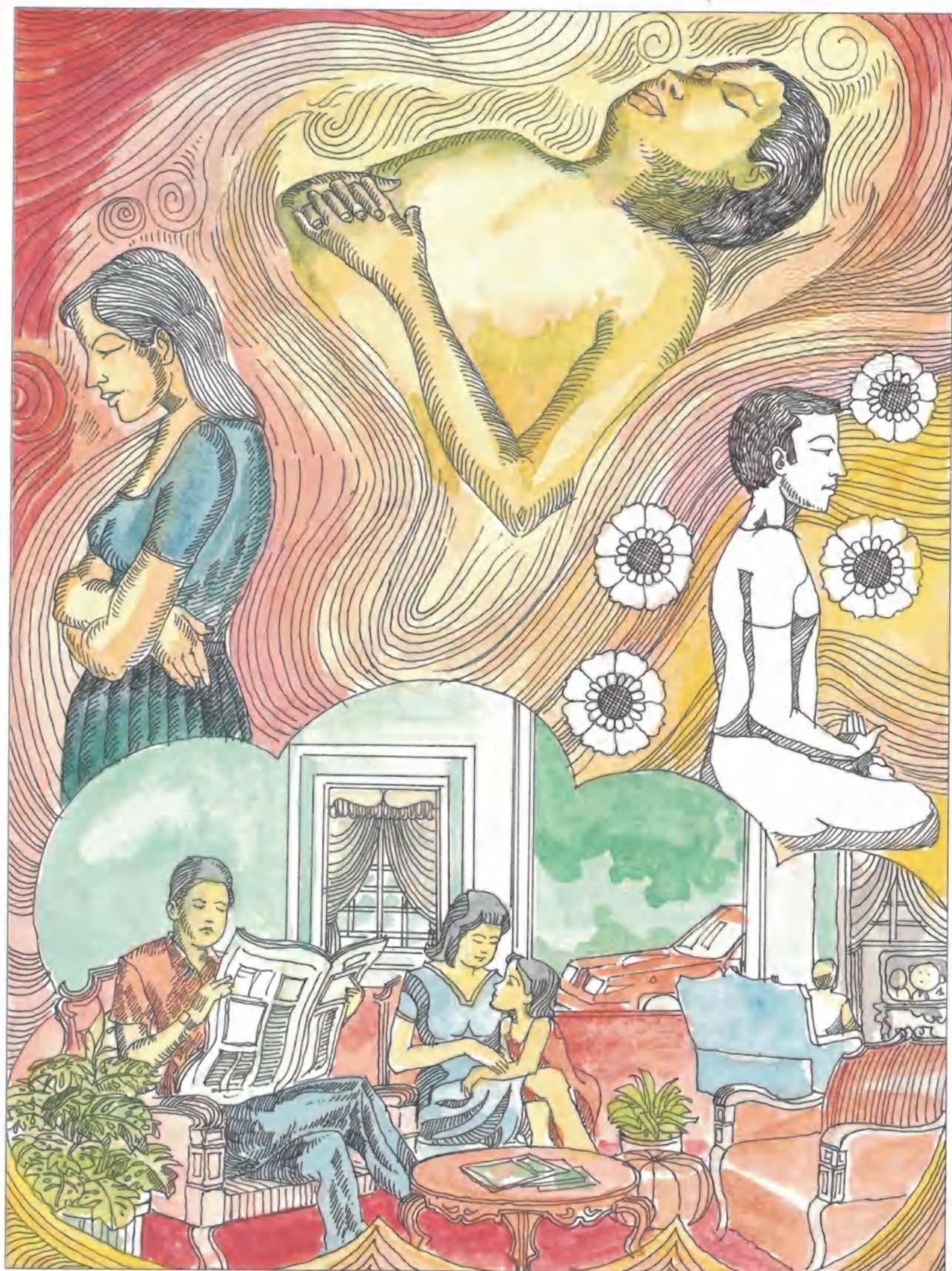
The only significance of life comes from the utilization of the brief life-span of beings on earth, for the purpose of acquiring merit.



Body is not worthwhile

Think wisely about these words. You must hear about the unstable nature of the body. This body is filled with thirty-two kinds impurities. Be wise. Learn that there is nothing worthwhile in this body. After obtaining a human form, if a person fails to acquire merit, results will be unfortunate.

One's foolishness can be realized only after one has fallen into one of the hundred-and-thirty-six woeful states.



SEPARATION

Perat jātiye patāgat dān hētu balayen me tānnē
 langat ven novā samaga davasāra un numut senehasinnē
 panat yana kala tani va geyi un ayat venyē bandinnē
 pinut kala niti kātuva yezi giya tānē dī sāpa vindinnē

Even if one were to live together (in this life) and spend time together in affection as a result of a wish made in a previous life, when life departs one is left alone and is separated from the household. But the merit acquired will be a constant companion and one will enjoy (the fruits) wherever one goes.

Commentary

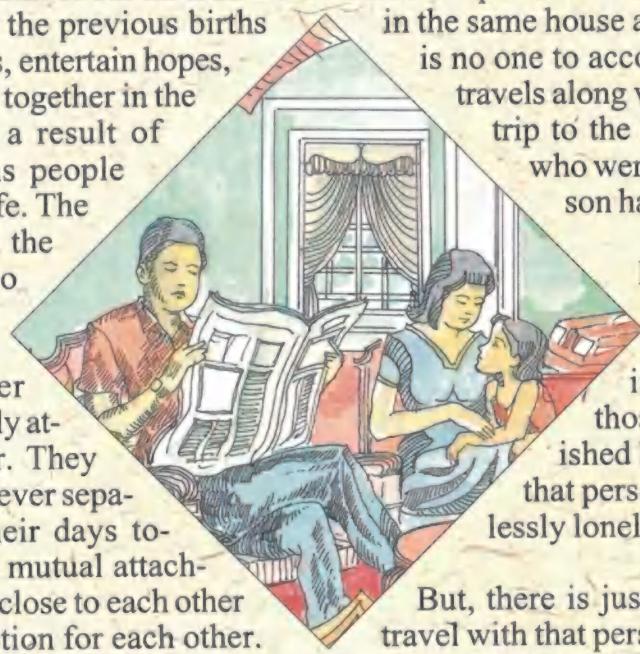
The relationships we enter into in this birth are the result of our links in the past births. In the previous births people make resolves, entertain hopes, express wishes to get together in the births to come. As a result of those determinations people get together in this life. The bonds established in the past births are so strong that, in terms of those past links, people live together during this birth, firmly attached to each other. They live together. They never separate. They spend their days together with intimate mutual attachment. They are quite close to each other in their intense affection for each other.

But, with all that love for each other, what really happens? One of those two people passes away. Although they have been living with each other so intimately, with such tremendous mutual attachment, when one dies, he or she dies all alone. All those peo-

ple who lived with him or her get separated from that person. Those who dwelt together in the same house are left behind. There is no one to accompany him. No one travels along with that person in his trip to the next birth. All those who were attached to that person have to stay behind.

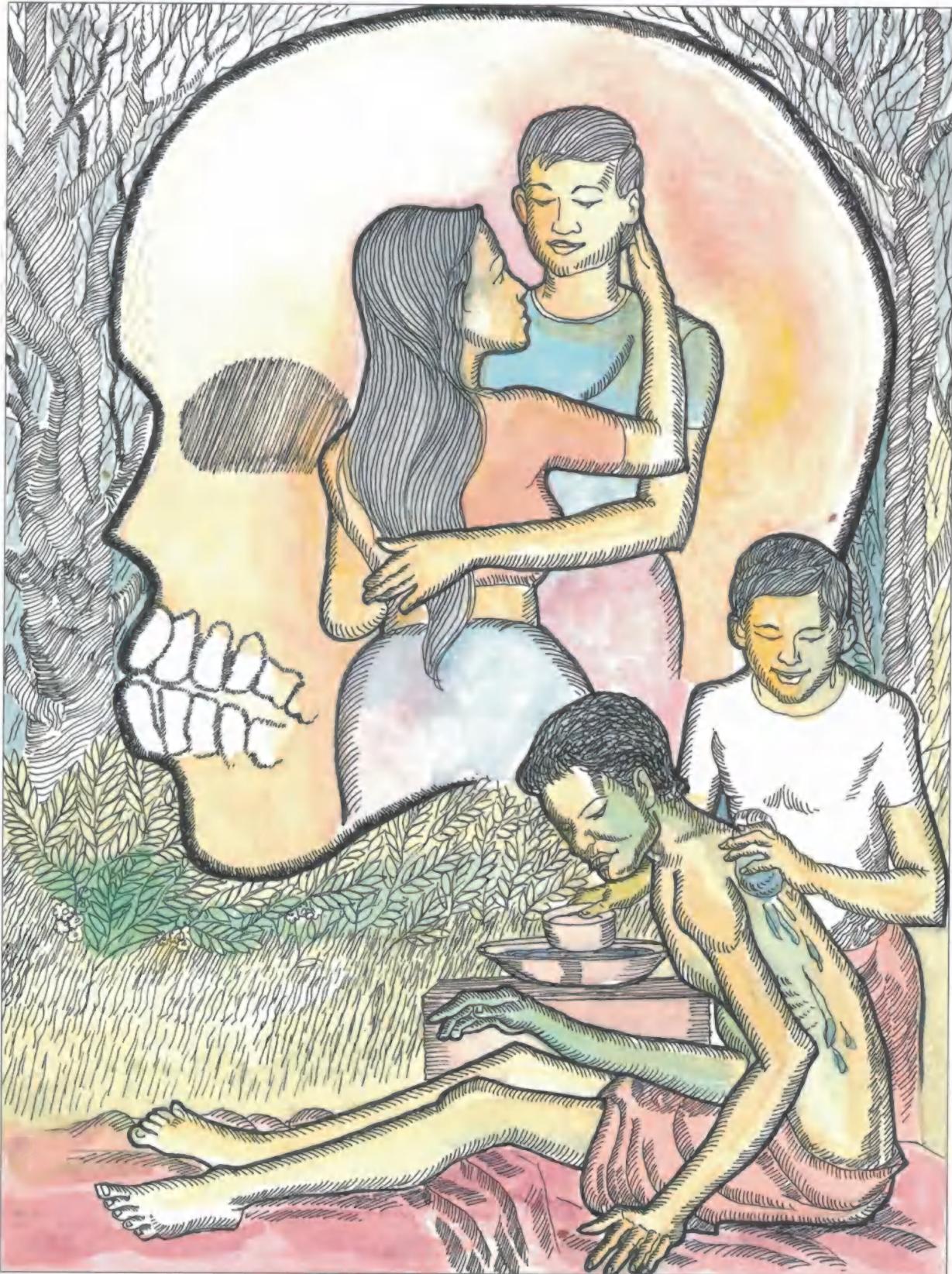
Death separates a person from all the persons he or she loved intimately. And, all those persons who lavished love and affection on that person are rendered helplessly lonely.

But, there is just one entity that will travel with that person, all the way to the next world. That is the merit acquired by that person during his life-time. It will accompany that person as a constant companion to the next birth. That quantum of merit will not only travel with that person, but will ensure a happy life during the next birth.



Only merit goes to the next birth

People may live happily together in this life as they wished in a past birth. But when life leaves them they are all alone. Those in the household will separate from them. But only the merit one has acquired will accompany one to the next birth. There it will ensure the person happiness.



INESCAPABLE DEATH

Sāra nū kuṇukayak äragena karana
 nāra tama himi samaga davasära un namut
 gōra maruvā pāmiṇi kal dān yanṭa
 bāra vä mä situvanta bārivada pinak

bahunāṭaka tade
 sāpa vinda vindē
 kāndavā e mā sandē
 kara gattot sondē

Taking hold of a body that is without essence, one determinedly put on variegated shows. Even if one were to spend one's life together with one's spouse, relishing the enjoyments, when the dreadful Mara approaches you in order to lead you away, there is no bailing out. It is good to have performed some merit.

Commentary

What does a human being actually do? He goes about with a body that is impermanent. And that body has nothing worthwhile on it. If at least that body were worthwhile, a pride in it would have been proper.

Does he do anything worthwhile? Holding onto this worthless body, beings perform a series of mask dances. They wear various masks and play a variety of roles, seriously. Women lead a life of happiness with their husbands. They live with great affection with the husbands, without relaxing their affection even for a moment. To them it is a life of immense happiness.

But, while they continue living in this manner, what happens? Death - the wicked Mara - makes his entry. Knowing fully well that it is high time he took over, Death (Mara)

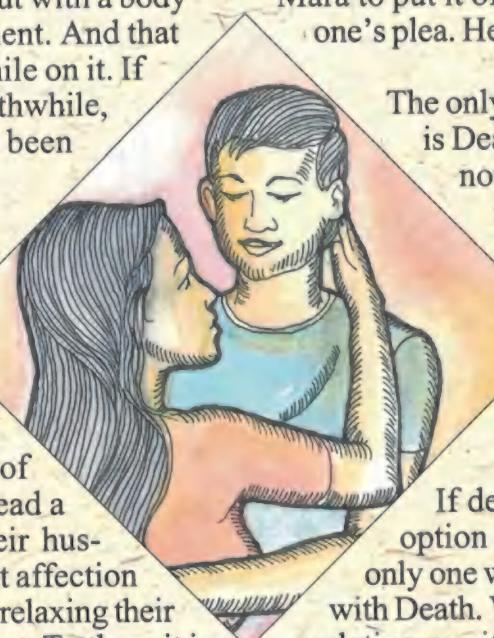
claims the spouse. No one can plead with Mara to put it off. He would not hear anyone's plea. He snatches away the spouse.

The only certainty in this “drama” is Death. Whether one likes it or not, whether one is ready or not Mara calls over.

Once Mara has set his mind on a person, there is no escaping from his horrible clutches.

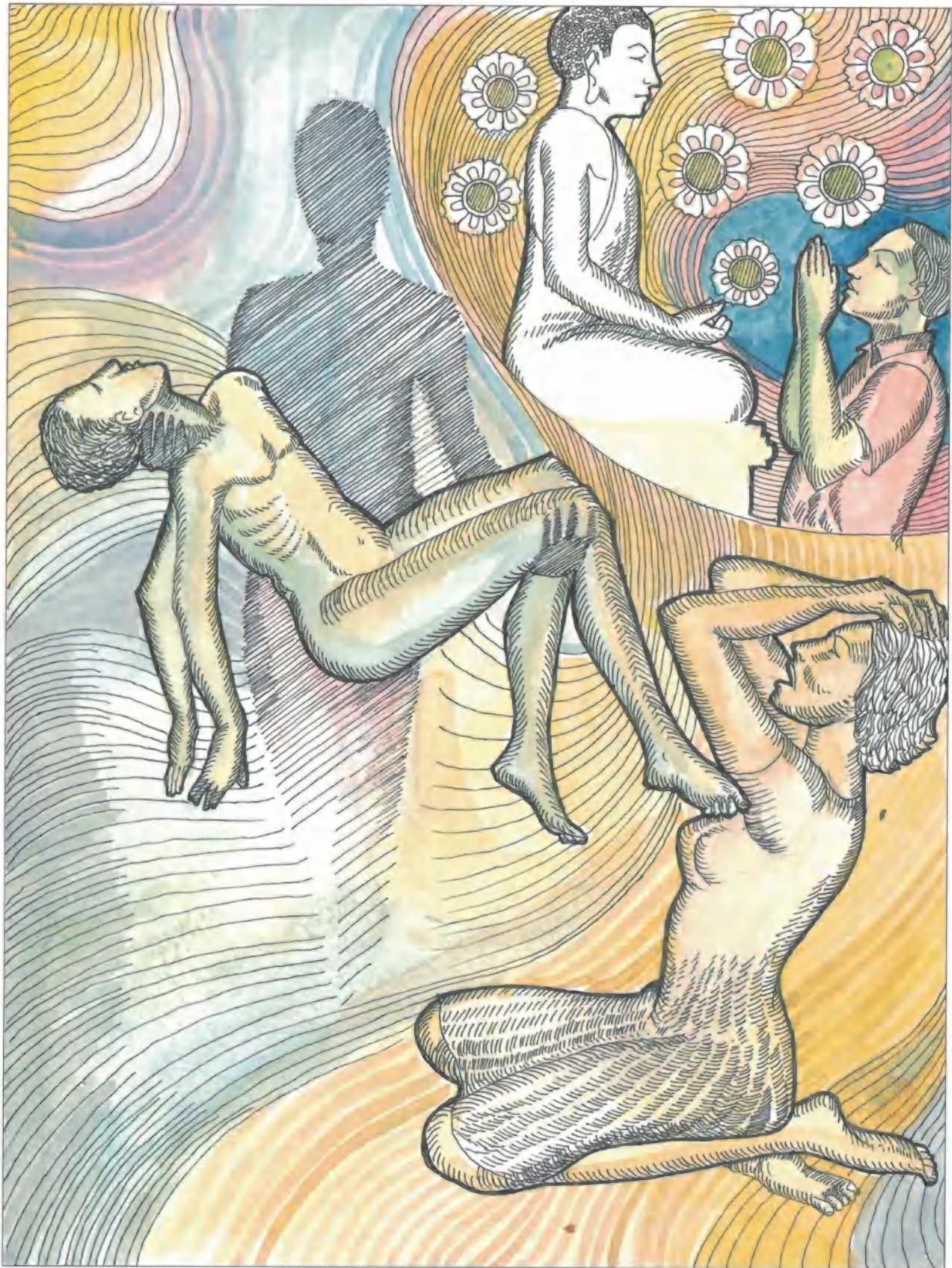
If death is certain, what is the option open to beings? There is only one way we could come to terms with Death. We can beat Death by accumulating merit during the brief life-time that a being has.

In this Stanza Death has been referred to as Mara. The personification of Death as Mara is found somewhat extensively in Buddhist Scripture.



Death cannot be escaped

Possessing a body that is not at all worthwhile, people perform various roles very seriously. A woman might enjoy life with her husband in constant happiness. But the wicked Mara (Death), knowing that his time has come, approaches to take him away. Even if you plead, you cannot stop Mara. Therefore it is good to acquire merit.



BUDDHA'S REFUGE

Saranā muninduge adaha pinakut nokara inne kumaṭa dō
 maraṇa paminena kalaṭa yamayā ävit kändavā yanṭa dō
 karana sondakam dam pinak kaṭa kiyanu nuvaṇin sonda vedō
 kumana anuvaṇa kam da näyini andanu siṭuvā ganṭa dō

Why remain without doing merit by having confidence in the refuge of the Great Sage? When death comes, are you waiting for Yama to lead you? Speak out! Aren't good actions, righteousness and merit beneficial? Kinsmen! What a foolish act is wailing? Is it intended to retain (the Dead)?

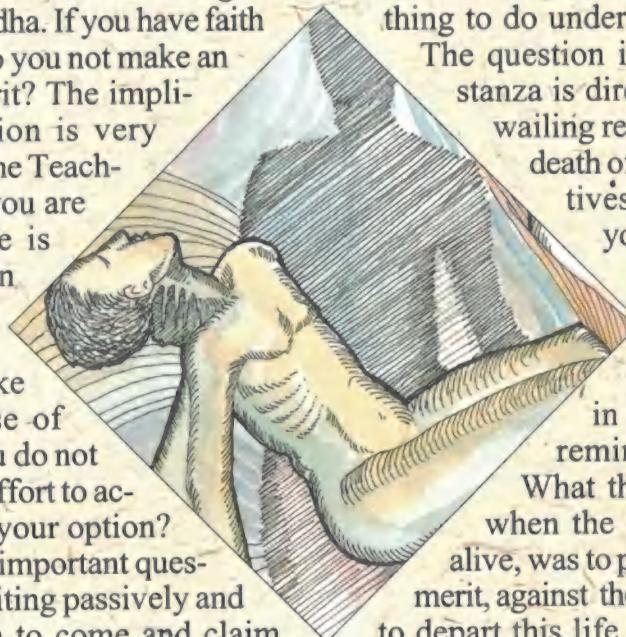
Commentary

The Stanza poses a series of questions. The first question is about taking refuge in the Buddha. If you have faith in the Buddha why do you not make an effort to acquire merit? The implication of the question is very clear. If you believe the Teachings of the Buddha you are fully aware that life is impermanent. When you know for a certainty that life is brief, you must make the best possible use of this short spell. If you do not make the necessary effort to acquire merit, what is your option? Then comes the next important question. Are you just waiting passively and helplessly for Death to come and claim you? Are you awaiting the arrival of the ruler of the Nether World (Yama) to come and take you away? A third question is asked. Without waiting passively isn't it better to

do some good, meritorious acts? Think about it and say whether that is not the best thing to do under these circumstances.

The question in the last line of the stanza is directly addressed to the wailing relatives who mourn the death of their relative: "O relatives, isn't it foolish that you should wail? Do you think, O relatives, that your wailing could make the departed person stay?" Implied in this last question is a reminder to the relatives.

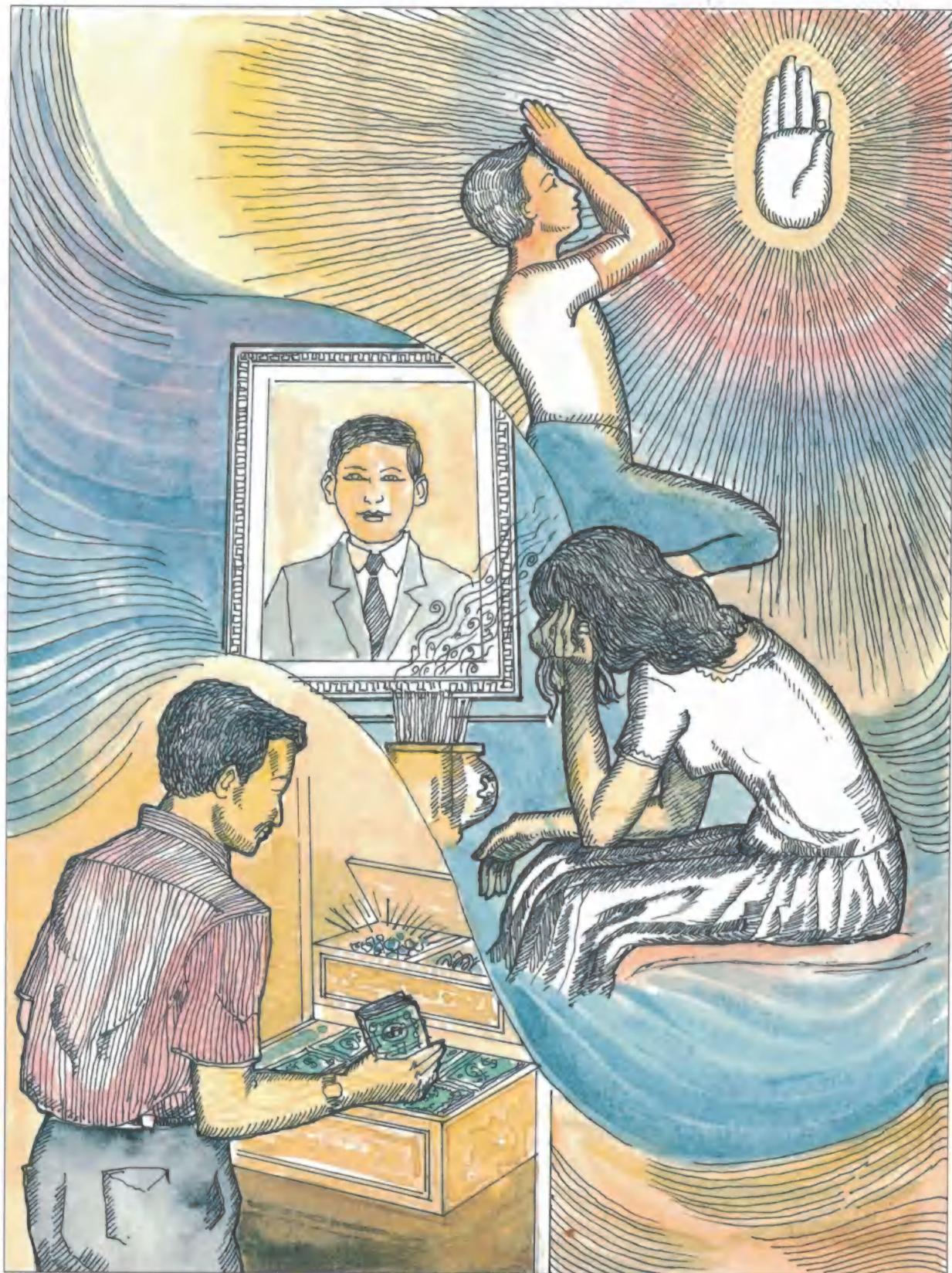
What they should have done when the departed relative was alive, was to persuade him to acquire merit, against the day when he will have to depart this life. Instead of doing that they wail aloud now. This is a matter all relatives should give much thought to.



Take refuge in Buddha

Why do you remain without acquiring merit, placing your confidence in the Buddha's Refuge ? Are you waiting for Yama (Death) to come and take you away ? Think. Isn't it good to acquire merit by giving alms and committing righteous deeds ? Relatives, how foolish is it to cry ?

Do you cry to make the dead stay back ?



DEAD ARE GONE

Andālā	kampā va unnat itin däkmek	novannē
tanālā	sita pinak nokara ma kumāta upayā	tabannē
damālā	yana naraka kuṇu kaya kumāta dō sāpa	vindinnē
dinālā	mok puraṭa yannaṭa makī mē baṇa	asannē

Even if one were to remain crying and agitated, there would not be the sight (of one who has departed). Why accumulate (wealth) without being content and not perform merit? Why resort to enjoyment with this putrid body which will be left behind? Listen to the preaching by me in order to successfully reach the city of release.

Commentary

This Stanza is addressed to those who mourn the death of a dear relative.

The Stanza makes a statement that will make the mourners realize the stark reality. You wail and weep. You are deeply shocked by the death of this person.

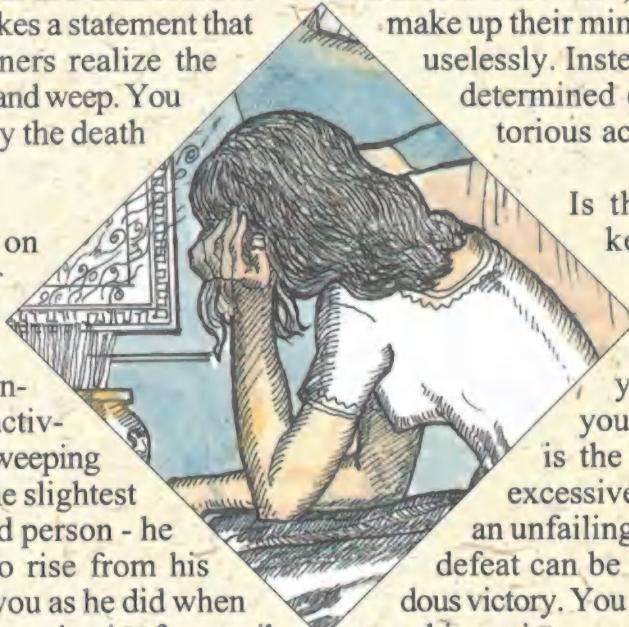
Although you keep on crying you will never be able to see that person again. In other words, what you are indulging in is a futile activity. Your wailing and weeping will not make even the slightest difference to the dead person - he will never be able to rise from his death and be among you as he did when he was living. The sorrowing is of no avail.

But, there is a course of action that will have a meaning. The mourners can understand the situation clearly and see the reality of what has happened. The example of the dead person establishes beyond doubt that he has not

been able to take away the wealth he has amassed. Therefore, the mourners should make up their mind not to amass wealth uselessly. Instead, they must make a determined effort to amass meritorious actions.

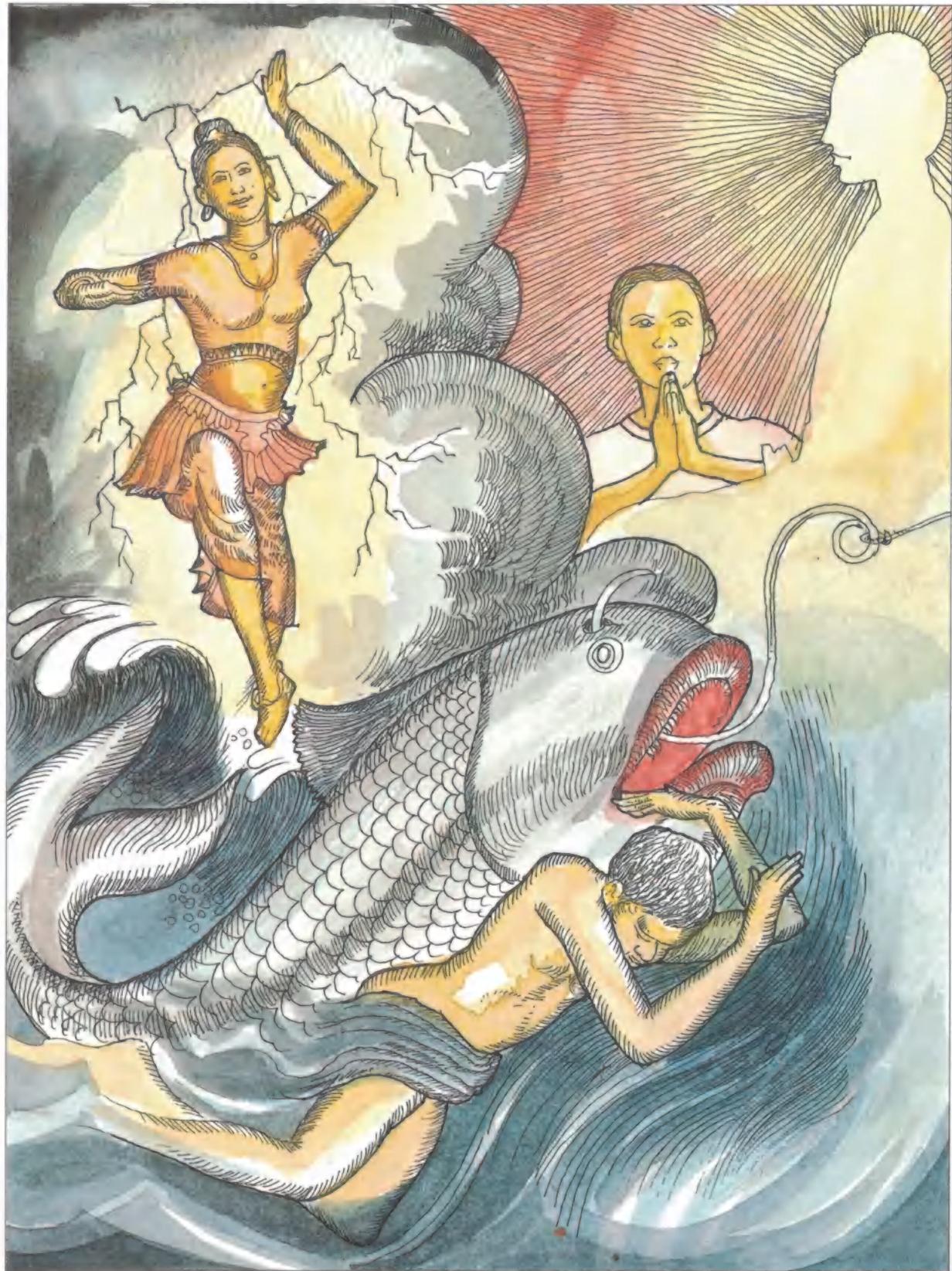
Is there any purpose in keeping this body in comfort? However well kept, it is a bundle of impurities that you will discard when you depart. What on earth

is the purpose of enjoying excessive comfort? But there is an unfailing method in which this defeat can be turned into a tremendous victory. You can make up your mind to achieve victory and reach Eternal Bliss. What should be done to win this great victory is also indicated. To reach this goal heed the doctrinal instructions I have given you. When these instructions are followed you can remove all the defilements and reach Liberation



Hooked by life

You are baited by the hooks of life. The comforts you enjoy while being battered by decay, are like the dances seen by a flash of lightning. Understanding this, do not feel lazy to acquire merit



A TRANSITORY ACT

Sitina	ävina gena me sasara	biliyē
vindina	me säpa jarayen täli	täliyē
dakina	nätum väni viduliya	eliyē
me däna	nokara kusalaṭa	kammaliyē

Being hooked to this life-process and experiencing these enjoyments while being constantly oppressed by decay is like seeing a play through the brightness of (a flash of) lightning. Realizing this, be not sluggish in the performance of the wholesome.

Commentary

Beings are viewed as fish caught in a baited hook. However much they struggled and tried, there is no escape for them. The hook they are caught up in is the cycle of existence. These beings, while suffering on the hook, are buffeted about by other disasters. They are assaulted by decay and ageing. This way, whatever happiness they experience is enjoyed while undergoing untold suffering.

Is this “happiness”, therefore, real? It is not at all a reality. It is only an illusion.

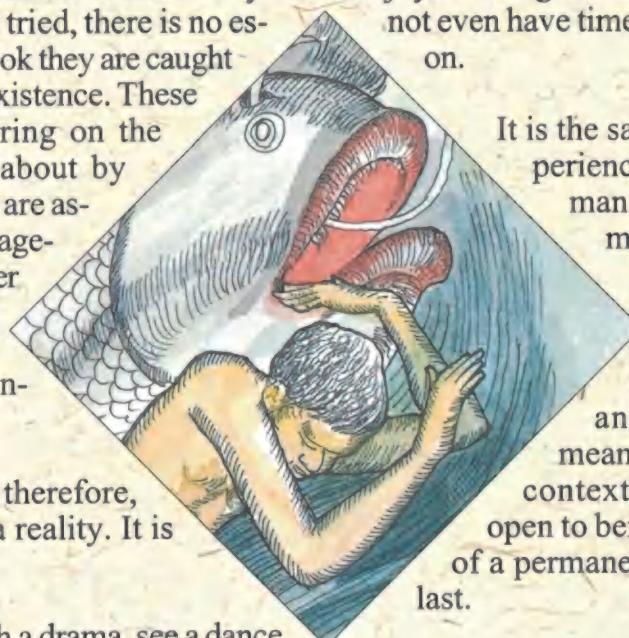
One is happy to watch a drama, see a dance and enjoy an entertainment. But, this enjoyment is short-lived. It lasts only a very brief moment.

It is, therefore, comparable to a dance per-

formance seen in a flash of lightning. The enjoyment is gone in just a flash. One cannot even have time to think what is going on.

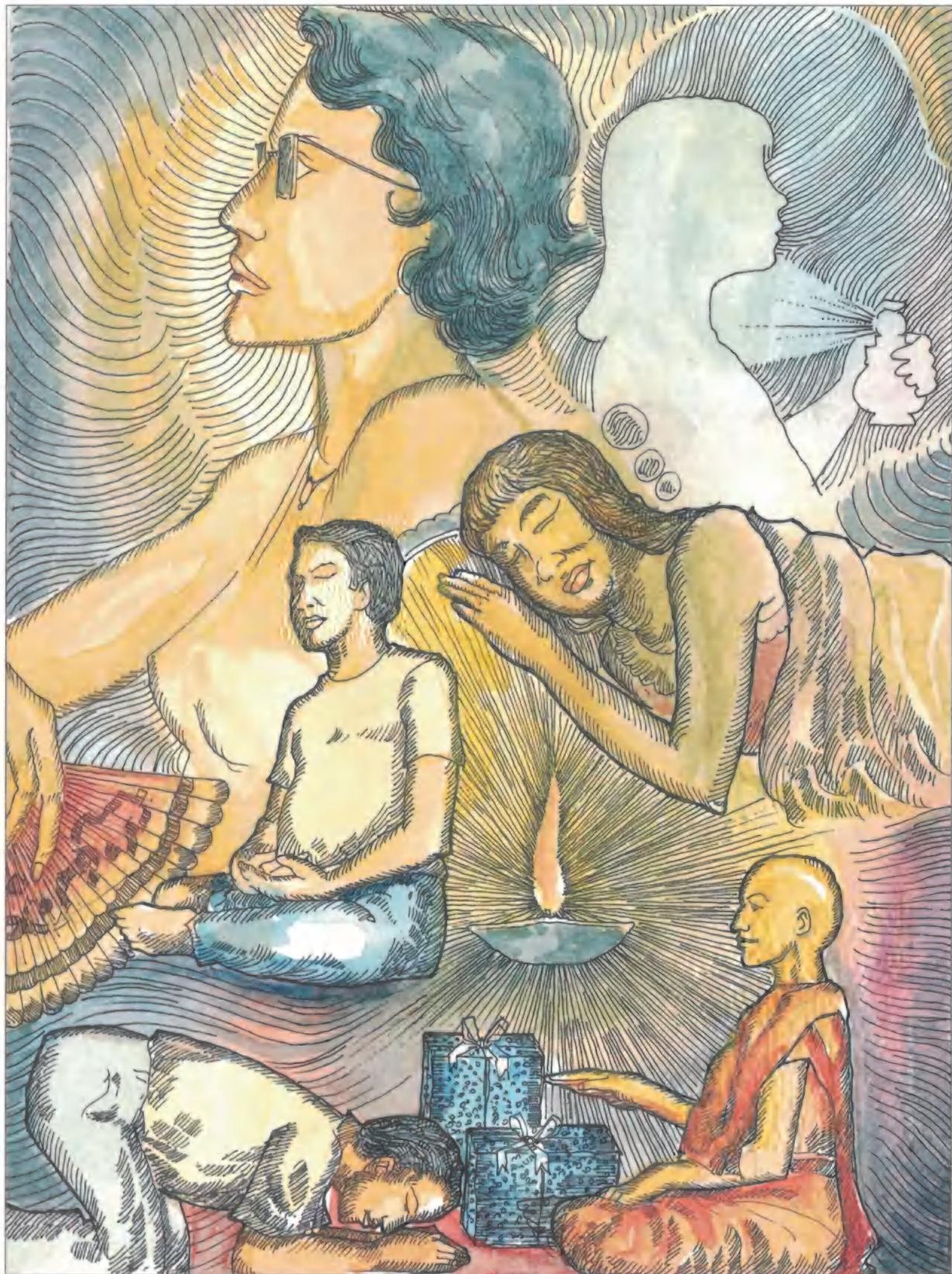
It is the same thing with the experience of happiness in human life. When the enjoyment is thought of it is gone. The implication is that this kind of ephemeral happiness is only a mirage – an illusion. It has no meaning at all. Given this context, what is the option open to beings? They must think of a permanent happiness that will last.

The only way to achieve such lasting happiness is to acquire merit through virtuous action. Once this kind of merit is amassed, it will ensure the eternal happiness of Nibbana.



Dead are gone forever

Even if you cried and were intensely moved, the dead cannot be seen again. Why don't you make up your mind and acquire merit ? Why do you amass wealth ? Why do you enjoy comfort, when you have to give up this impure body ? Listen to my discourse in order to reach the city of Liberation successfully.



LUXURIES ARE ILLUSORY

Mānen	inditat mē säpa	perumaya
sīnen	gä suvandak sē	borumaya
dānen	sīlen no kalot	darumaya
pānen	andurāta genayayi	karumaya

Even though one remains conceited (thinking) that these enjoyments are ultimate, they are unreal like the application of unguents in a dream. If righteousness is not practised through generosity, virtues, etc., one's actions will lead one from light to darkness.

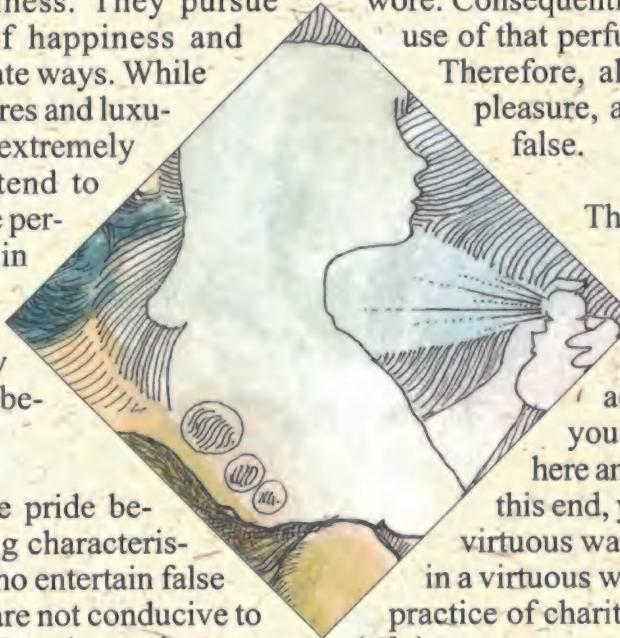
Commentary

People have various concepts about what is happiness. They pursue their ideals of happiness and luxury in their separate ways. While they enjoy the pleasures and luxuries of life, they feel extremely elated. Since they tend to think that they are the persons who enjoy life in the best possible way, they have no regard for persons they consider to be lesser beings.

This way, inordinate pride becomes an outstanding characteristic of these people who entertain false values. Their ideals are not conducive to spiritual well-being. But, those who are unnecessarily proud about their wealth, their pleasures, their affluence and their status, are not aware that all this is meaningless.

All this is mere illusion. It is as much a mirage as a perfume applied in a dream. When you wake up, you have no trace whatsoever of your dream - perfume. There is

not even a mere whiff of that fragrance you wore. Consequently, what on earth is the use of that perfume worn in a dream? Therefore, all that luxury, all that pleasure, and all that elation are false.

These illusory enjoyments will never take a person anywhere. You have to be very realistic and perform actions that will ensure you a happy future - both here and hereafter. To achieve this end, you will have to follow virtuous ways. The main elements in a virtuous way of life consist of the practice of charity (dāna) and morality (sīla).

Charity is generosity for its own sake, with no thought whatsoever of expecting anything in return. Morality implies practising virtuous ways, shunning evil. If you do not correct your ways and conduct your life in a righteous manner, your bad "kamma" (actions) will lead you from light to darkness.

Body Causes Sorrow

When a heap of dry wood catches fire, flames engulf the wood. Wood and fire become one. The whole entity has to be described as fire. In the same way "body" gets fully enveloped in suffering. Therefore the body has to be described as a bundle of sorrow



BODY CAUSES SORROW

Dara räsa	gini ävulunu kala	nibandē
gini misa	darayäyi yana basa	noyedē
ema lesa	ek koṭa vadahaṭa	munindē
duka misa	kayakäyi yana basa	noyedē

When a pile of wood catches fire, the term "wood" is not continually used; instead it is called "fire". Similarly, in the words of the Great Sage, where the two (concepts) are related, the term "body" does not occur (always); instead the term "suffering" occurs.

Commentary

People take trouble and collect a heap of fire-wood. Eventually, they set fire to that heap of dry wood. A fire gets kindled. The whole heap of fire-wood starts to burn. In a moment, the total heap is consumed by fire. There is not even a trace of the fire-wood. Instead, what one sees is a series of flames engulfing the fire-wood. You can no longer use the expression fire-wood. You have to call it a fire. The wood is totally enveloped by the fire.

The Buddha - the Supremely Enlightened One - selected this example of the wood and the fire to drive home the real nature of the human body. According to the Buddha, it is not at all possible to separate the human body from suffering. Suffering and the human body are intricately intertwined. Just as one cannot distinguish between fire and wood, one cannot separate

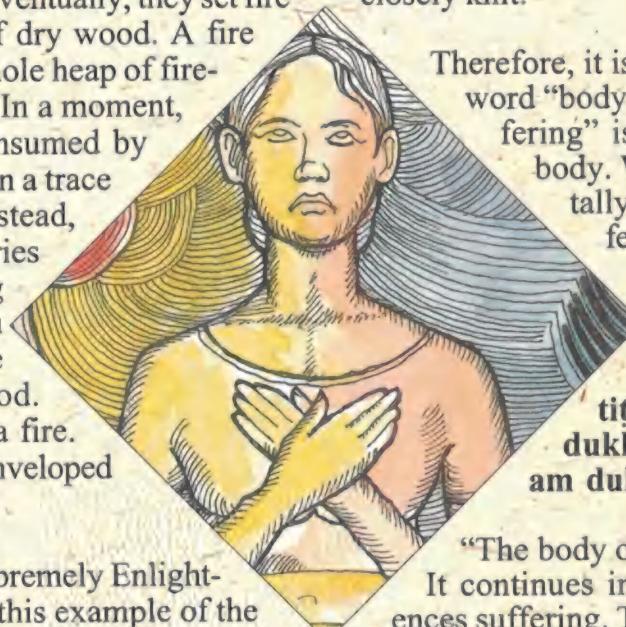
body from suffering because they are so closely knit.

Therefore, it is not proper to use the word "body" since the word "suffering" is sufficient to denote body. Why is the body so totally identified with "suffering"? The Buddha has explained it this way:

Dukkhamevahi
samhoti Dukkham
titthaticetica Nāññam
dukkha sambhoti Nāññ-
am dukkha nimjjhati

"The body originates in suffering.
It continues in suffering. It experiences suffering. There is nothing bereft of dukkha - suffering".

The Buddha has summed up the situation this way "Samkhittena pancupadana - khandā- dukkhā". "All the five forms of clinging are suffering." This way, the totality of the physical being is suffering.



Craving is destructive

A crow seeing an elephant-carcass floating down a river, perches on it, enjoying the elephant's flesh. The carcass floats down river and reaches mid-ocean. The crow, unable to get back to land, dies.



CRAVING IS DESTRUCTIVE

Ganga	yana ätkuñä inda mas	rasatā
sindu	mäda vädä vänasunu men	kaputā
lada	isurehi loba kalahot	topatā
bava	sayuren gamanek näta	godatā

Like the crow, delighting in the taste of meat, remaining on the carcass of an elephant floating down the river, will come to ruin by falling into the ocean; for you who are greedy of the opulence you have obtained, there will be no landfall in the ocean of becoming.

Commentary

Some people tend to get excessively greedy of the possessions they have. Without any kind of thought about all other matters, such people devote all their life to the enjoyment of their luxuries. Their craving knows no end. There is no limit to what they will want to amass. Nor are they ever satisfied with the things that they have already gained.

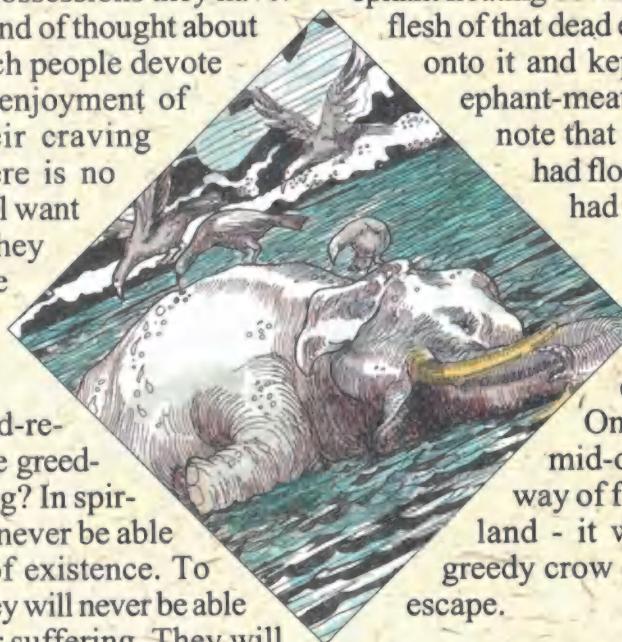
What will be the end-result of such excessive greed - such limitless craving? In spiritual terms they will never be able to cross the ocean of existence. To put it another way, they will never be able to put an end to their suffering. They will keep on clinging to the enjoyment of sensual pleasure, neglecting the opportunity to achieve Liberation. An apt image explains this admirably.

Once, a crow noted the carcass of an elephant floating down a river. Craving for the flesh of that dead elephant, the crow flew onto it and kept on enjoying the elephant-meat. But, the crow did not note that eventually the carcass had floated down the river and had reached the ocean.

Not being aware of this development, it kept on eating and enjoying the flesh.

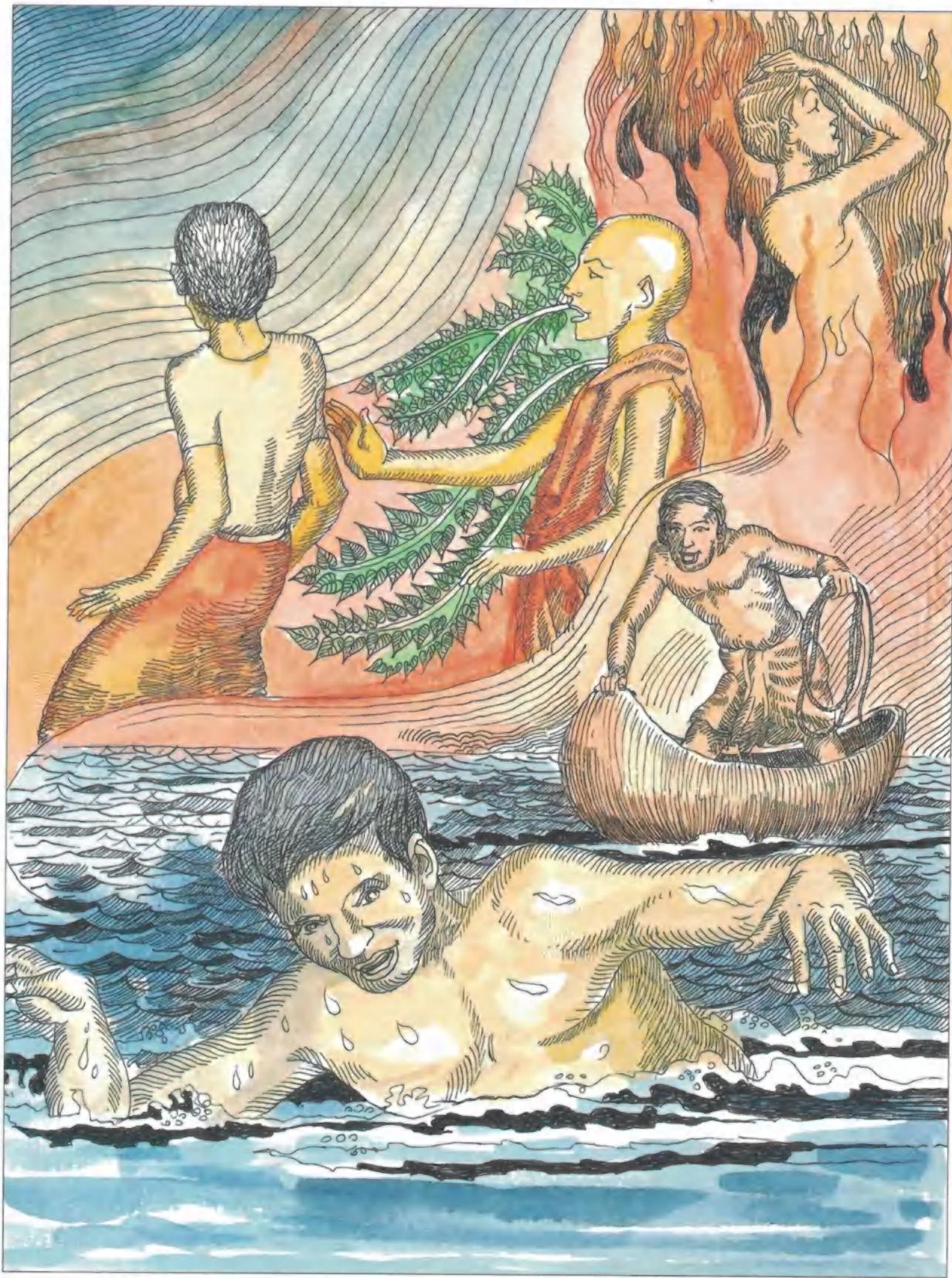
Once the carcass reached mid-ocean, the crow had no way of flying back to the mainland - it was so far away. The greedy crow died, unable to fly and escape.

This story was narrated by a Pacceka Buddha named Sonaka to a King of Benares who was totally given to the enjoyment of sensual pleasures, to the exclusion of all else.



Neglecting help

Seeing a man, who is about to drown in a flooded river, a helpful person takes a boat to rescue him. The drowning man refuses help. Ordinary men and women who disregard the works of the Buddha, are in a similar situation.



NEGLECTING HELP

Ganga vaturehi yana minisaku
langa kaļa oruvaṭa no nägena
saga mok dena baṇa adahā
duga -tiya väda topa kima duk

dukinē
lesisnē
nogenē
vindinē

As a person floating on a river with difficulty would not get on a boat brought close to him, why do you enter an evil destiny and experience suffering without believing in the preaching that brings about heaven and release.

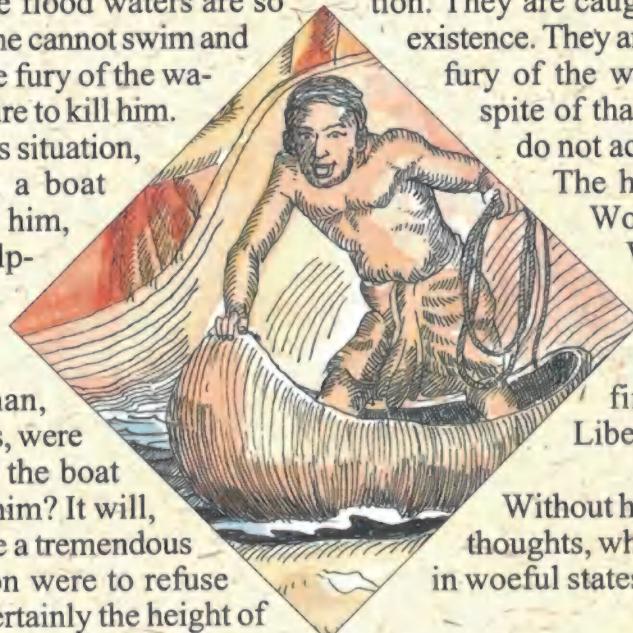
Commentary

This Stanza refers to a person caught in a flood. The flood waters are so ferocious that he cannot swim and save himself from the fury of the waters. The flood was sure to kill him. While in that hopeless situation, a helpful person in a boat brings his boat near him, taking pity on the helpless person caught up in the flood.

But, what if this man, who has lost all hopes, were to refuse to get into the boat that was brought to him? It will, without any doubt, be a tremendous tragedy if that person were to refuse that help. It will be certainly the height of folly and stubbornness.

But, most human beings are in that situation. They are caught up in this flood of existence. They are whirled about by the fury of the waters of *samsāra*. In spite of that tragic situation they do not accept the offered help. The help is offered by the Word of the Buddha. The Word of the Buddha ensures the happiness of the pleasant celestial states, and finally in the state of Liberation.

Without heeding such liberating thoughts, why do they opt to suffer in woeful states?



MAHĀMANGALA SUTTA
The Pāli Text and English Translation

Evam me sutam Ekam samayam Bhagavā Sāvatthiyam viharati Jetavane Anāthapiṇḍikassa ārāme. Atha kho aññatarā devatā abhikkantāya rattiya abhikkantavanā kevalakappam Jetavanam obhāsetvā yena Bhagavā ten' upasamkami upasamkamitvā Bhagavantam abhivādetvā ekamantam atthāsi. Ekamantam thitā kho sā devatā Bhagavantam gāthāya ajjhabhāsi

Thus I have heard:

On one occasion the Blessed One, was dwelling at the monastery of Anathapindika in Jeta's Grove near Savatthi. When the night was far spent, a certain deity whose surpassing splendour illuminated the entire Jeta Grove, came to the presence of the Blessed One, and drawing near, respectfully saluted and stood at one side. Standing thus, he addressed the Blessed One in verse:

1.	Bahū devā manussā ca Mangalāni acintayum Ākāmhamānā sotthānam Brūhi mañgalam-uttamam	- Many deities and men, yearning after good, have pondered on Blessings. Pray, tell me the Supreme Blessing.
2.	Asevanā ca bālānam, Pañditānañ ca sevanā Pūjā ca pūjanīyānam Etam mañgalam-uttamam	- Not to follow or associate with fools. to associate with the wise, and honour those who are worthy of honour. This is the Supreme Blessing.
3.	Patirūpadesavāso ca, Pubbe ca katapuññatā Attasammāpañidhi ca Etam mañgalam - uttamam	- To reside in a suitable locality, to have done meritorious actions in the past, and to have set oneself on the right course (towards emancipation). This is the Supreme Blessing.
4.	Bāhusaccañ ca sippān ca Vinayo ca susikkhito Subhāsitā ca yā vācā Etam mangalam - uttamam	- Vast-learning, perfect handicraft, a highly trained discipline and pleasant speech. This is the Supreme Blessing.
5.	Mātāpitu upatthānam Puttadārassa saṅgaho Anākulā ca kammantā Etam mañgalam - uttamam	- The support of father and mother, the cherishing of wife and children and peaceful occupations. This is the Supreme Blessing.
6.	Dānañ ca dhammacariyā ca Ñātakānañ ca saṅgaho Anavajjāni kammāni Etam mañgalam - uttamam	- Liberality, righteous conduct, the helping of relatives and blameless actions. This is the Supreme Blessing.
7.	Ārati virati pāpā Majjapānā ca samyamo Appamādo ca dhammesu etam mañgalam - uttamam	- To cease and abstain from evil, forbearance with respect to intoxicants and steadfastness in virtue. This is the Supreme Blessing.
8.	Gāravo ca nivāto ca santuṭṭhī ca kataññutā kālena dhammasavanam etam mañgalam-uttamam	- Reverence, humility, contentment, gratitude and opportune hearing of the Dhamma. This is the Supreme Blessing.
9.	Khantī ca sovacassatā samaññānañ ca dassanām kālena dhammasākacchā etam mañgalam-uttamam	- Patience, obedience, sight of the Samanas (holy men) and religious discussions at due season. This is the supreme Blessing.
10.	Tapo ca brahmacariyāñ ca, ariyasaccāna dassanām nibbānasacchikiriyā ca etam mangalam-uttamam	- Self-control, pure life, perception of the Noble Truths and the realisation of Nibbana. This is the Supreme Blessing.
11.	phutthassa lokadhammehi cittam yassa na kampati asokam virajañ khemam etam mañgalam-uttamam	- He whose mind does not flutter, by contact with worldly contingencies, sorrowless, stainless and secure. This is the Supreme Blessing.
12.	Etādisāni katvāna sabbattha-m-aparājita sabbattha sotthim gacchanti tam tesam mañgalam uttamam	- To them, fulfilling matters such as these, everywhere invincible, in every way moving happily. These are the Supreme Blessing.

MAHĀ MANGALA SUTTA

(THE DISCOURSE ON GREAT BLESSINGS)

Pāli Prose Order and English Translation

Evam	Thus
me	I
sutam	heard
Ekam samayam	Once
Bhagavā	the Blessed One
Sāvathiyam viharati	was living near the city of Sāvatthi
Jetavane	in the Jeta Grove
Anāthapiṇḍikassa ārāme	in Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery
athakho	at that time
aññatarā devatā	a certain deity
abhikkantāya ratti�ā	during the late hours of the night
abhikkanta vannā	of exceeding glory
kevalakappam Jetavanam	the whole of Jetavana monastery
obhāsetvā	having illuminated
yena Bhagavā	where the Blessed One was
tena upasam kami	there he came
upasam karmitvā	having come there
Bhagavantam abhivādetvā	having saluted Him with deep respect
ekamantam athāsi	stood aside
ekamantam thitā kho	having stood at aside
sā devatā	that deity
Bhagavantam	to the Blessed One
gāthāya	a verse
ajjabhāsi	addressed
Bahu	Many
devā	deities
manussā ca	and human beings
mangalāni	blessings
acintayum	unable to figure out
ākaṇkha mānā	(are) expecting
sothānam	a solution
brūhi	please explain
mangala muttamam	the highest blessings
Asevanā ca	Not to associate with
bālānam	the ignorant ones
pañditānañca	but the wise ones
sevanā	associate with
pūja ca	honour
pūja nīyānam	those worthy of honour
etam mangala muttamam	this is the highest blessing
Patirūpa	Congenial
desa	place
vāso ca	residing
pubbe ca	in the past
kata puññatā	having acquired merit
atta	one's self
sammā	well
panidhi ca	directed
etam mangala muttamam	this is the highest blessing
Bāhu	Extensive
saccam ca	learning
sippam ca	proficiency in arts and crafts
vinayo ca	disciplined
susikkhito	restrained
subhāsitā	well-spoken
yā vāca	words
etam mangala muttamam	this is the highest blessing

MAHĀ MANGALA SUTTA

(THE DISCOURSE ON GREAT BLESSINGS)

Pāli Prose Order and English Translation

Mātāpitū	Parents
upatthānam	caring well
putta dārassa	children and spouse
sangaho	cherishing
anākulā ca	unblemished
kammantā	livelihood
etam mangala muttamam	this is the highest blessing
Dānam ca	Generosity
dhammacariya ca	righteous in behaviour
ñātakānam	relatives
sangaho	caring for
anavajjāni	blameless
kammāni	actions
etam mangala muttamam	this is the highest blessing
Arati	avoiding
virati	abstinence
pāpā	(from) evil
majjapānā ca	intoxicating drinks
samyamo	refrain from
appamādo ca	diligence in
dhammesu	righteous behaviour
etam mangala muttamam	this is the highest blessing
Gāravo ca	Reverence
nivāto ca	humility
santuṭṭhi	contentment
kataññutā	gratitude
kālena	timely
dhammasavanam	listening to the Dhamma
etam mangala muttamam	this is the highest blessing
Khanti ca	Patience
sovacassatā	obedience
samanānañca	of religious persons
dassanam	seeing
kālena	timely
dhammasākacchā	discussions of the Dhamma
etam mangala muttamam	this is the highest blessing
Tapo ca	Austerity
brahma cariya ca	holy and chaste life
ariya saccāna	the Noble Truths
dassanam	studying in-depth
Nibbāna sacchi kiriyā ca	realization of Nibbana
etam mangala muttamam	this is the highest blessing
Phuṭṭhassa	Touched by
loka dhammehi	worldly vicissitudes
cittam yassa	whose mind
na kampati	is not shaken
asokam	sorrowless
virajam	free from blemishes
khemam	highly secure
etam mangala muttamam	this is the highest blessing
Etā disāni	These things
katvāna	having fulfilled
sabbatham	everywhere
aparājitā	unvanquished
sabbattha	everywhere
sotthim	happiness and tranquility
gacchanti	they attain
tam tesam mangala muttamam	that then is the highest blessing

MAHĀ MANGALA SUTTA

(THE THIRTY - EIGHT BLESSINGS)

1. Asevanā ca bālānam	: Not associating with the ignorant
2. Panditānan ca sevanā	: Associating with the wise
3. Pūja ca pūjanīyānam	: Honouring those deserving honour
4. Patirūpadesavāso ca	: Residing in a congenial environment
5. Pubbe ca katapuññatā	: Merit acquired in the past
6. Attasammāpanidhi ca	: Properly directed mind
7. Bāhusaccam ca	: Extensive learning
8. Sippañca	: Proficiency in arts and crafts
9. Vinayo ca susikkhito	: Restrained and well disciplined
10. Subhāsitā ca yā vācā	: Graciously kind speech
11. Mātāpītū upaṭṭhānam	: Caring for parents
12. Puttadārassa sangaho	: Cherishing children and spouse
13. Anākulā ca kammantā	: Uncluttered livelihood
14. Dānañca	: Generosity
15. Dhammacariyā ca	: Moral and righteous conduct
16. Natakānañ ca sangaho	: Looking after one's relatives
17. Anavajjāni kammāni	: Unblemished action
18. Ārati pāpā	: Shunning evil
19. Virati pāpā	: Abstaining from evil
20. Majjapānā ca samyamo	: Refraining from intoxicants
21. Appamādo ca dhammesu	: Diligence in being righteous
22. Gāravo ca	: Reverence
23. Nivāto ca	: Humility
24. Samtutthi ca	: Contentment
25. Kataññutā	: Gratitude
26. Kālena dhammasākacchā	: Listening to the Dhamma in due time
27. Khanti ca	: Patience
28. Sovacassatā ca	: Obedience
29. Samanānañ ca dassanam	: Meeting religious personalities
30. Kālena dhammasākacchā	: Discussing Dhamma, when essential
31. Tapo ca	: Austerity
32. Brahmacariyañca	: Chaste life
33. Ariyasaccāna dassanam	: Insight into the Noble Truths
34. Nibbāna sacchikiriyā ca	: Realization of Nibbana
35. Phutthassa lokadhammehi cittam yassa na kampati	: Mind unshaken by changing fortunes
36. Asokam	: Freedom from sorrow
37. Virajam	: Freedom from blemishes
38. Khemam	: Perfect security
Etādisāni katvāna sabbattha maparājītā Sabbattha sotthim gacchanti	: Those who adhere to these cannot be defeated and will live in perfect safety

SBMC - GROUP VISIT TO MALAYSIA



THIS GROUP PHOTOGRAPH RECORDS THE VISIT TO MALAYSIA, OF THE MEMBERS OF THE SINGAPORE BUDDHIST MEDITATION CENTRE, LED BY CHIEF MONK VEN. WERAGODA SARADA MAHA THERO, TO CELEBRATE THE SEVENTY-EIGHTH BIRTHDAY OF VEN. DR. KIRINDE DHAMMANANDA MAHA NAYAKA THERO, CHIEF PRELATE, MALAYSIA AND SINGAPORE AND TO OFFER THE GROUP'S FELICITATIONS TO THE MAHA NAYAKA THERO FOR THE UNIQUE AND MAGNIFICENT SERVICE RENDERED BY HIM TO BUDDHISM AND TOWARDS THE PEACE AND HAPPINESS OF THE WHOLE OF MANKIND.

16TH. MARCH. 1997



The Author

Ven. Weragoda Sarada Maha Thero

Ven. Weragoda Sarada Maha Thero - the author - has presented in this publication two major books in one. Of these two, one is the fully illustrated English version of the popular Buddhist Discourse "Mahā Mangala Sutta" (The Discourse on the Highest Blessings).

The second book anthologized here is the "Lovāda Sangarāva" (The Book of Worldly Welfare). It is a 15th Century classic in Sinhala, and is a well-known didactic poem. The stanzas culled from that work are presented in this book with an accompanying English version supported by illustrations in colour.

The Venerable author of this publication is now recognized world-wide as a Buddhist monk who has contributed a series of outstanding books to world literature on issues relating to Buddhism and to problems linked to human ethics.

Todate, he has more than 170 titles to his credit. Millions of these books have been distributed world-wide, free. His unerring recognition of the reading habits of the moderns has resulted in the production of high quality works lavishly illustrated with colour art.

This Venerable author began his sacred mission of spreading the Word of the Buddha, world-wide, quite a long while ago. Born in Sri Lanka in 1941, he was ordained a Buddhist monk in 1953, when he was just 12. He pursued his higher education at Sri Jayawardhanepura University, Sri Lanka, and obtained his First Degree in 1964. He functioned as Principal, Indurupathvila University College, Sri Lanka, from 1965 - 1967, and from 1967 - 1969, he was Principal, Sudharma University College.



He dedicated himself fully and with missionary zeal to the spreading of the Word of the Buddha abroad, beginning his service in this field in Penang, Malaysia. There, he was Principal, Mahindarama Sunday Pali School until 1979. In that year, he came over to Singapore and founded The Singapore Buddhist Meditation Centre (SBMC). The Centre has always been supported by a highly dynamic and enthusiastic group of devotees.

The Venerable author, currently the Chief Monk at SBMC, pioneered in the founding of the American-Sri Lanka Buddhist Association of which he is still the Director. In addition, he is the current General Secretary of Japan-Sri Lanka Buddhist Centre of which he was the Founder President. He is the Chief Incumbent Monk of Jayanthi Vihara, Weragoda, Sri Lanka.

His unique publications programme is distinguished for a whole body of works which have established a series of records. His monumental work "Treasury of Truth -Illustrated Dhammapada" is unparalleled for the thousands of responses it evoked just in one day.

His works appear in Sinhala, Japanese, Korean, Chinese and in English. His *magnum-opus* todate, "Treasury of Truth - Illustrated Dhammapada", was recently brought out in a Chinese version.

His "Illustrated Jataka Tales", work on which is in progress, will have especially commissioned illustrations to adorn its text.

Blessed with a fertile imagination the Venerable author has already lined up an impressive array of publishing projects to spread the Word of the Buddha, for the good of the many, for the well-being of the many.

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